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GAME OF THRONES

FIRE & BLOOD

Death, dragons and deceit with the stars of Season 4

THE WALKING DEAD

DARYL DIXON MUST DIE

Norman Reedus on leaving the show

WORLD FIRST INTERVIEW

ABRAMS ON EPISODE VII

The Jedi Master breaks the silence on Star Wars

TIME LORD IN CRISIS

DR WHO SERIES 8

Peter Capaldi goes old school

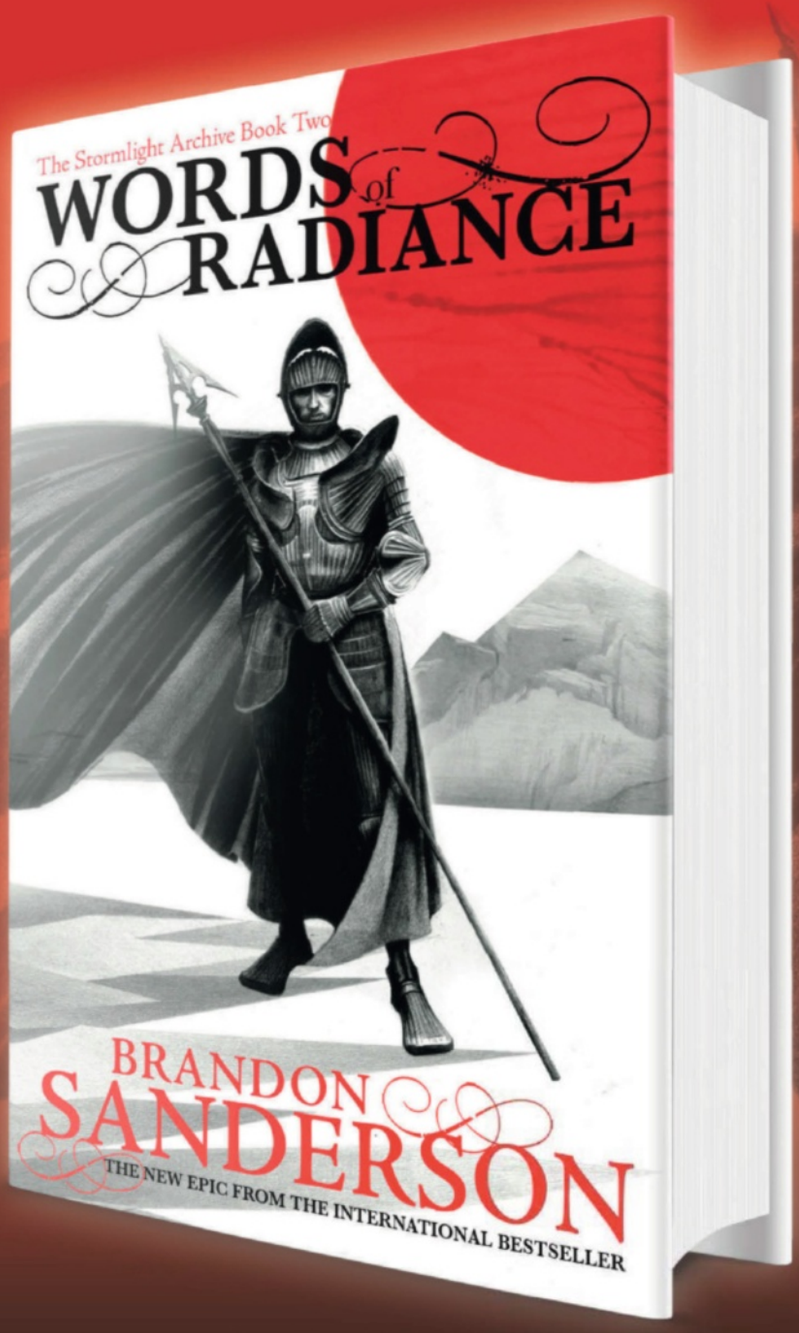
INSIDE THE MARVEL MACHINE

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2

Andrew Garfield speaks out

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GET EXCITED ABOUT STAR WARS: REBELS

Without George Lucas' restraints, *Clone Wars* powerhouse Dave Filoni and his fellow producers have gone right back to what makes this universe so cool: the shades of grey, something absent from the moral absolutism of the prequels. With two of the main characters exhibiting different combinations of Han and Luke (and maybe a bit of Kyle Katarn too), *Star Wars: Rebels* looks like an awesome precursor for the old-school values we long to see in *Star Wars: Episode VII*.

So much is made of Netflix's formula for television (it feels strange to call it that; how about 'episodic storytelling'?), giving audiences a steady flow of things that keep them streaming episode after episode. Instead of the sole focus being on an end-of-episode cliffhanger or balls-to-the-wall season finale to get you coming back, Netflix does all those things, but it also keeps spooning in doses of shock, sex and comedy, keeping you watching second by second instead of hour by hour.

HBO, then, has much more in common with Netflix than it does with any conventional network. *Game Of Thrones* has proven to be narrative MSG, keeping you entranced with torture, tragedy, twists, turns, sex and death. Sure, George RR Martin's original text is the blueprint for *Game Of Thrones*' jaw-agape story developments, but showrunners David Benioff and DB Weiss have cranked it up, thrown in more boobs and blood, and redistributed it in the name of must-see TV.

It's what gives the show such power and makes the boxset as much a cause for celebration as the broadcast: power that few other genre shows match, although *American Horror Story* and *The Walking Dead* come pretty damn close; power that demands you cancel all appointments and just binge.

Game Of Thrones is an addiction, but it's the sort of addiction that needs no intervention.

James

James Hoare
Editor

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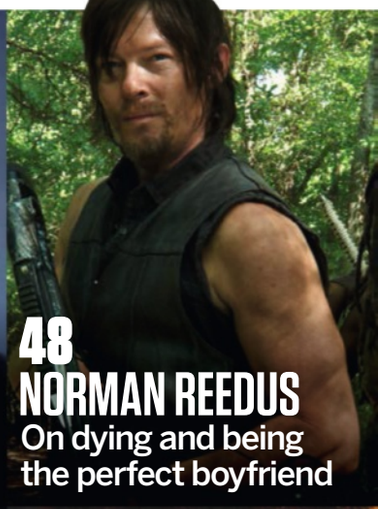
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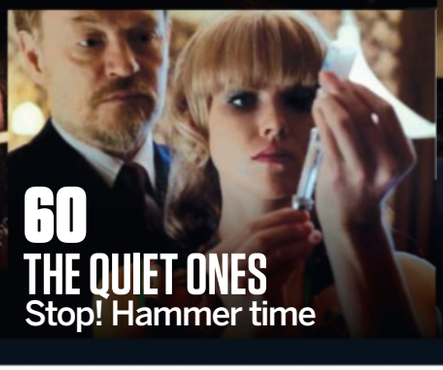
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20 GAME OF THRONES

The cast discuss death, violence, sex and more ahead of Season Four

COVER FEATURE



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MEET THE TEAM

Q. What was your most shocking TV death scene?



James Hoare Editor
A. Aeryn in Farscape
Utterly tragic, with a real pain that lingered. All the feels, guys.



Jodie Tyley Deputy Editor
A. Spike in Buffy
I could barely see Spike's self-sacrifice through the tears.



Jonathan Hatfull
Staff Writer
A. Joyce in Buffy
Forget vampires; Joyce's death was all too human. "Mommy?"



Steve Wright Sub Editor
A. Talisa in Game Of Thrones
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NEWS

STAR WARS IS "FULL STEAM AHEAD"



Star Trek 3 is left in the lurch as JJ Abrams admits he's focusing on Episode VII

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY**

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Nolan pal Wally Pfister on his Depp-starring debut

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The 300 star on new horror show Penny Dreadful

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The first word on Guillermo del Toro's vampire thriller



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Starfleet is still in search of a captain, as JJ Abrams abandons ship. When asked if he had found a replacement director, he admitted it's no longer on his radar, saying: "I'm just focusing on *Star Wars: Episode VII* right now... We're working really hard on it, and it's quite a thrill."

The movie's production slowed last October when original screenwriter Michael Arndt left the project. But Lucasfilm drafted in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*'s Lawrence Kasdan to co-write, and the project is back on course for a December 2015 release. "We've got our script and we're in deep prep," he confirms. "Full steam ahead."

Fans can expect some solid casting announcements soon, putting an end to the rumour mill that has seen the likes of Michael Fassbender, Benedict Cumberbatch and *Breaking Bad*'s Jesse Plemons thrown into the mix. Abrams revealed that there was some truth about the latter, however: "[Plemons] is one of the actors that we've talked to," he said. "It's not often that I read about actors that I'm going to be meeting. I get to read articles about actors who were going to come in, so I get to see someone and say, 'Oh, I read that I was going to see you. It's very nice to see you.' But it's usually agents talking to people about what's happening."

The new cast members will appear alongside returning stars Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill, who are playing Princess Leia, Han Solo and Luke Skywalker respectively. Speaking to *TV Guide*, Fisher said she was due to start shooting in March or April, and she's hoping to sport the iconic ensemble: "I'd like to wear my old [cinnamon buns] hairstyle again, but with white hair," she said. "I think that would be funny." And of course, R2-D2 will be wheeling around on set. According to Ford on *Reddit AMA*, "He hasn't stopped beeping about it."

> **"WE'RE WORKING REALLY HARD ON IT, AND IT'S QUITE A THRILL"**
> JJ ABRAMS



Mark Hamill is expected to reprise his role as Luke Skywalker in the new *Star Wars* trilogy.

If only we could understand the diminutive droid, as the director is remaining as tight-lipped as ever. Abrams even sidestepped a question about the running time of the film, simply promising, "It will be movie length." After all, he survived the speculation storm about the true identity of *Star Trek Into Darkness*' villain, so Abrams is fully aware of what his secret-keeping can do to a fanbase: "It's amazing to see how many [rumours] there are," he continues. "But it's sweet, because it shows that there's an interest in this movie that we all obviously know is there. It is an incredible thing to see how many crazy things get thrown out that people often then write commentaries about – how happy they are, how disappointed they are about something that is completely false. It's a lot of noise, frankly."

One way he zones out is by talking up his small-screen projects, and his latest, *Believe*, sees him team up with *Gravity* helmer Alonso Cuarón. He may have worked with Steven Spielberg, but this was a particular fanboy thrill for Abrams: "Over 20 years ago I met Alfonso Cuarón, and I've wanted to work with him desperately ever since. It wasn't until Alfonso, through some magical moment, called and said, 'I have an idea for a TV show,' that it gave this opportunity to me and to Bad Robot. When he pitched the idea, it didn't have to come from Alfonso to be something that was compelling and something that felt like I had to see that on television," he says.

The show centres around a girl with supernatural powers who has a connection to a wrongfully imprisoned death-row inmate. Sci-fi is certainly Abrams' speciality, but don't expect the geek auteur to remain working exclusively within the genre forever: "We're actually working on two sitcoms right now, and fingers crossed they get picked up," he says. "I have always wanted to do a sitcom ever since I was a kid." In the meantime, at least he's had good practice while writing witty one-liners for Han Solo.

Star Wars: Episode VII will be released on 18 December 2015. *Believe* is airing now on NBC in the US.

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EVIL APPROACHES



Angelina Jolie stars in this reimagining of the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale.

DEWITCHED

The untold story of Sleeping Beauty's evil fairy will be revealed, says Elle Fanning

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY**

In real life, *Super 8*'s Elle Fanning is about to celebrate her sweet 16 and choose her prom dress, so her next role as a princess is good timing. In *Maleficent* she stars alongside Angelina Jolie as the wide-eyed Aurora, who pricks her finger and falls into a coma in the fable *Sleeping Beauty*, which the film is based on. "It's my favourite [story]!" Fanning tells *Indiewire*. "I related to her the most because I had the long blonde hair. Cinderella had the bangs."

Maleficent will follow the tradition of other untold stories and shed some light on the eponymous evil fairy's perspective, played by Angelina Jolie. "It's like *Wicked* in a sense," she continues in the same interview. "You go back and discover more about Maleficent. But [my character is] definitely in there. It's a strong kind of relationship with me and Maleficent."

The whole spectacle was filmed on green screen, so even the film's stars have yet to see how this fairy tale becomes reality. But if the trailer's anything to go by, we're in for a sinister spin on the source material. It's no wonder, as veteran production designer and VFX supervisor Robert Stromberg has previously worked on Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland* and Sam Raimi's *Oz: The Great And Powerful*, but *Maleficent* will mark his directorial debut. We'll have to wait until May to see whether this story has a happy ending.

Maleficent will be released in cinemas on 30 May.



BEYOND BATMAN

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Will Johnny Depp-starrer Transcendence be more Inception or Star Wars?

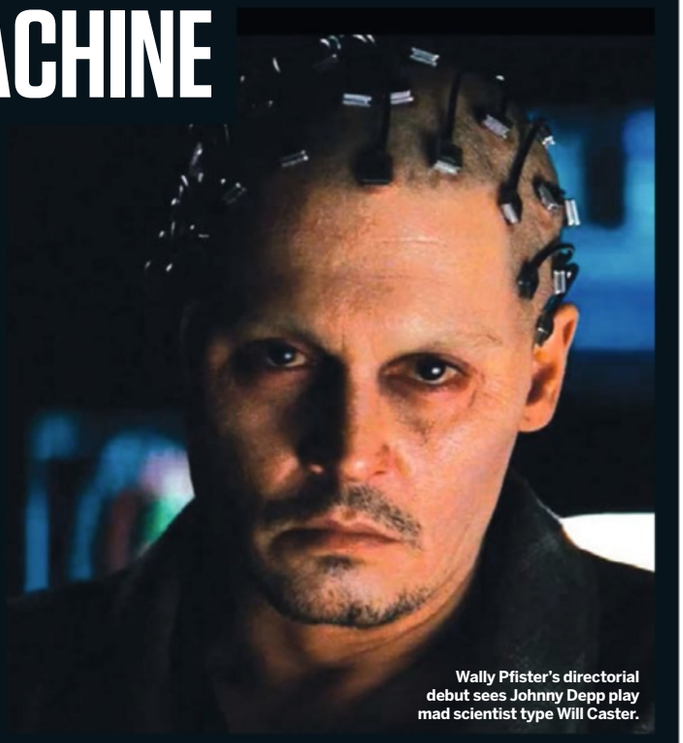
INTERVIEW **STEVE NASH**

When Christopher Nolan's cinematographer Wally Pfister debated directing sci-fi thriller *Transcendence*, he was understandably scared. The project boasts a high concept and an all-star cast, headed up by Johnny Depp as ailing scientist Dr Will Caster, who downloads his brain into a supercomputer, becoming an unstoppable device. The supporting cast includes Rebecca Hall as his wife and Paul Bettany as his best friend, both fellow researchers who question the morality of Will's experiment.



Pfister confessed his hesitation to Nolan, and the *Inception* and *Dark Knight* director had this advice: "Chris said, 'Storytelling is the same whether you're dealing with $100 million or $10 million,'" he told the *LA Times*. But those expecting a Nolan-like movie are in for a surprise: "My training comes from Chris, but my emotional content comes from a different era. I'm steeped in a Seventies, pre-*Star Wars* period films like *Soylent Green*. Chris comes from a different place."

Transcendence will be released in cinemas on 25 April.



Wally Pfister's directorial debut sees Johnny Depp play mad scientist type Will Caster.

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TRIVIA ANGELINA JOLIE'S DAUGHTER PLAYS THE YOUNG AURORA IN *MALEFICENT*.



> "IT WAS A CHALLENGE TO BE VIOLENT AND CUT PEOPLE IN HALF"
> EVA GREEN

FIVE THINGS WITH EVA GREEN

From vengeance warrior to seductive gothic beauty

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY** INTERVIEW **STEVE NASH**

1 Licence To Kill

Green has thrown Johnny Depp around the room in *Dark Shadows* and met a sticky end as Bond girl Vesper Lynd in *Casino Royale*, but when it comes to action, *300: Rise Of An Empire* was in another league. "I had a bit of training underwater for the scene where she was drowning in *Casino Royale*, but it's so different here," she says. "I had to train double swords for two months before the shoot, and it was a challenge to be violent and cut people in half. But lots of fun."

2 The World Is Not Enough

Her role as vengeance-seeking Persian general Artemisia was an opportunity for the 33-year-old to cut loose. "She's so bad, and it's great because as an actress it's hard to find strong roles," she admits. "Most of the time you're offered the love interest or the boring girlfriend. And here, she is full on the mission. I enjoy playing evil, but not one-dimensional characters. I like the ebbs and cracks in the armour. She's ruthless and a badass."

3 From Russia With Love

Starring as the seductive Vanessa Ives in new TV series *Penny Dreadful*, Green will be confronting her demons. It's dubbed a psychosexual horror, suggesting it won't be as prudish as its Victorian London setting. "It's such a repressed time, but my character's very hungry for life," she reveals. "All her senses are tingling all the time. But it's in Victorian time, so it's always the conflict inside her."

4 You Only Live Twice

Speaking of things that go bump in the night, *Penny Dreadful* is packed with infamous monsters from literature. The eight-episode series will feature Frankenstein's monster, Dracula and even Dorian Gray, exploring their origins. "It's scary, but this is a very human show," she explains. "It's not just scary for the sake of it." The cast is just as well known as the characters, with Green starring alongside Timothy Dalton, Billie Piper and Josh Hartnett.

5 For Your Eyes Only

Little else is known about the Sam Mendes-produced show, except that Josh Hartnett plays an American embroiled in dark mystery and Green's Vanessa is concealing secrets of her own. "It's a magnificent story," she teases. "It's a gift to have such a meaty role, and you don't get that often. She's a beautiful heroine, and John [Logan, executive producer] is just... he's god. He is so talented, and all the characters are very flawed and complicated. It's great to sink your teeth into."

Penny Dreadful airs in the US on 11 May on Showtime and after in the UK on Sky Atlantic. *300: Rise Of An Empire* is in cinemas now.

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SPACED OUT

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

What secrets can we unearth from the Guardians Of The Galaxy trailer?

WORDS JODIE TYLEY



TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

We suspect Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord (Chris Pratt), has stumbled upon an Infinity Gem in a scene that reminds us of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. This, along with his walkman, has got to be a reference to his character being a child of the Eighties who longs for home. The Gem will either be the Soul, Reality, Mind or Time stone – our money's on the latter, which could transport Peter back to Earth.



ROGUE'S GALLERY

The Nova Corps' data reveals some intriguing tidbits about our anti-heroes. First up is prime beefcake Drax the Destroyer (Dave Bautista), who's seeking vengeance after the death of his wife and family. There's a flash of an evil grin as we switch to super assassin Gamora (Zoe Saldana), whose origin is true to the comics. She's the last survivor of her race, and has murdered 12 people.



OTTER MADNESS

At the other end of the naughty spectrum is Rocket Raccoon (Bradley Cooper), whose crimes include theft and escape from incarceration. Did you spot that one of his associates is Lylla, his otter girlfriend from the comics? His partner in crime is Groot (Vin Diesel), the team's "houseplant/muscle", and of course we have already been introduced to Peter Quill as Star-Lord.



DOCTOR WHO'S ASSASSIN

Shaving her head was an, ahem, bold move for Karen Gillan, and with this glimpse of her as Nebula you know she did the right thing. In the comics she's the granddaughter of Thanos, but in the movie she will be working with Ronan the Accuser (Lee Pace). With Thanos trying to gather all the Gems, Nebula might set her sights on the Collector (Benicio del Toro), seen post-credits in *Thor: The Dark World*.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY IS RELEASED ON 1 AUGUST 2014

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CLONE RANGER

ORPHAN BACK

Star Tatiana Maslany on the "daunting" second season of the sexy clone drama

INTERVIEW **STEVE NASH**

Most cast members rejoice when they land a second series of their own show, but Tatiana Maslany wasn't exactly cracking open the champers. "It was daunting to come back to it because I knew kind of what to expect," the star of *Orphan Black* admits. "I knew how much work it was going to be and the kind of physical and emotional challenge of it. But at the same time there was a sense of 'OK, we've done this, so there's not that pressure of will whether it will work.' So it was time to go deeper with it, and I think that's what was exciting about coming back Season Two."

It's understandable, since 28-year-old Maslany plays not one, but seven different clones. She did such a good job the first time around, however, that she earned a Golden Globe nomination for Lead Actress in a TV drama. "I love all these characters so much, and Graeme [Manson, writer] has continued to flesh out the worlds of each of the clones," she says. "I know these women now, so it's just about challenging and stretching them and not getting stuck in, 'I'm just going to do the Alison thing.' It's like, 'What about Alison going in that direction? What happens when she's thrown into this situation?'"

For those who didn't catch the show the first time around, the series focuses on Sarah, a con-woman who assumes the identity of a woman who looks exactly like her. A chilling clone conspiracy unravels, and as Sarah tries to uncover the mystery, she finds more people who are her spitting image, but someone is hunting them down. "To me, Cosima has always been the one who's the most fascinated with life, so it's interesting for her to be facing her mortality," she says. "That's what we start to explore in Season Two: the one who appeared to maybe be the most buoyant and the most full of life is now facing the science gone wrong.

"We left them all at very tense places, kind of high-stakes places, so there was so much to work with and the challenge of it continues every day. It's what keeps me absolutely obsessed with the show."

Orphan Black Season Two will return on 19 April to BBC America and later this year on BBC Three.





Things get even more tense for Sarah in Season Two.



RED DWARF AND DOCTOR WHO LEGENDS UNITE

Best of British genre stars team up for debut Sci-Fi Scarborough

The British seaside hasn't had such spine-tingling genre cred since *The Prisoner* saw Patrick McGoohan face down in the sand while Rover rolled all over him. Geeks in the north have a good reason to rejoice, as Sci-Fi Scarborough is bringing a host of TV luminaries to the North Sea resort town.

Sixth Doctor Colin Baker will be joining a line-up that includes the core cast of *Red Dwarf*: Kryten star Robert Llewellyn; Rimmer's Chris Barrie; Cat's Danny John-Jules and Lister's Craig Charles – who will also be DJing – as well a host of special guests.

Event co-organiser Steve Dickinson enthused, "To announce the fact that we have the Sixth Doctor coming to Sci-Fi Scarborough is quite incredible. Colin is a brilliant guest, and we are ecstatic that he has agreed to join us."

Held at the Spa Complex on 5 -6 April, Sci-Fi Scarborough brings together guests from the world of science fiction, fantasy, comics, cosplay and anime for an unforgettable weekend by the seaside.

Find out more about Sci-Fi Scarborough at www.scifiscarborough.co.uk, and book your tickets now from www.scarboroughspa.co.uk.



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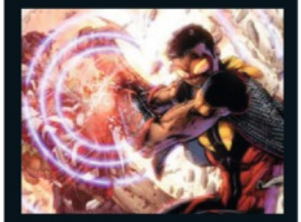
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DRESSED TO STUN

TIMELESS FASHION

A closer look at the Doctor's new togs

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY**

Peter Capaldi's era is officially underway, and this first look at the new costume reveals a throwback to earlier incarnations. For the fashion-conscious among you, he's wearing a dark blue Crombie coat with red lining, paired with a white shirt and a John Smedley v-neck cardigan (Cavendish in Midnight for £150), with a pair of leather brogue boots made by the British Boot Company to order for £215. "He's woven the future from the cloth of the past," Capaldi says of his new costume. "Simple, stark and back to basics. No frills, no scarf, no messing, just 100 per cent rebel Time Lord."

> "SIMPLE, STARK, AND BACK TO BASICS. NO FRILLS, NO SCARF, NO MESSING, JUST 100 PER CENT REBEL TIME LORD"

TIME LORD TAILORING

How the Doctor found his iconic looks

UNEXPLAINED THEFT TARDIS



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TRIVIA COINCIDENTALLY, CAPALDI'S CHARACTER IN *WORLD WAR Z* IS CREDITED AS 'W.H.O. DOCTOR'.



ANOTHER EARTH

IS ALT THE NEW MISFITS?

Being Human writer Jamie Mathieson on exploring parallel worlds in his new show ALT

INTERVIEW **JODIE TYLEY**

Everyone dies on *Game Of Thrones* for a reason. For smoke monster victim Renly Baratheon (Gethin Anthony) and Daenerys' double-crossing handmaiden Doreah (Roxanne McKee), it was to star in E4's latest sci-fi venture *ALT*. That's the story writer and creator Jamie Mathieson is sticking to, anyway: "They both got killed, so we could have them, that's what it was all about!"

The new drama pilot is aiming to fill the gap that *Misfits* left behind, but you won't find any boiler suits or superpowers in this show. Described as a "mind-bending and hilarious tumble down a 21st Century rabbit hole," *ALT* follows 24-year-old Danny (Anthony), who's about to move in with his girlfriend Suzy (McKee), when his stoner ex-best mate Milo (Craig Roberts) calls him out of the blue to ask for his help. The trio suddenly find themselves transported to a parallel universe, where they encounter different versions of themselves – and a ruthless assassin (Jason Flemyng from *X-Men: First Class*), who wants them dead.

"It's the idea of the everyman in a fantastical situation trying to cling on to who he is, and there lies the comedy," says Mathieson. "It's Arthur Dent on a spaceship trying to get the computer to make a cup of tea because he's an Englishman and he *will* drink tea; it's Ed in *Shaun Of The Dead* answering his mobile phone, holding up two fingers and saying "Two secs!" when he's surrounded by zombies. That theme of trying to hang on to who you are even though the world's gone crazy is running through our show as well."

And Mathieson knows his comedy. Starting out as a stand-up comedian, he went on to write some of the most memorable episodes of *Being Human*, including 'Type 4' (where Annie is followed home by a zombified chav) and 'The Graveyard Shift', where suave vamp Hal clashes with wide-eyed werewolf Tom. The mismatched mates in *ALT* have a similarly tempestuous relationship, as Mathieson explains: "I'm going back to things like *Steptoe & Son*, the idea of a character you so want to get rid of and a friendship that's broken, but you can't leave them; you feel guilty or beholden in some way, and that's definitely the dynamic with Danny and Milo," he says. "When we go into parallel worlds, you'll see that they're completely different people, and that's good fun because we know the basic versions of them. To put it another way, you only enjoy fat Monica when you're used to thin Monica. You've got to really know and love her before you find fat Monica really endearing and fun."

> "IT'S THE IDEA OF THE EVERYMAN IN A FANTASTICAL SITUATION, TRYING TO CLING ON TO WHO HE IS"
> **JAMIE MATHIESON**

Whether we will get to know Danny, Milo and Suzy over the course of an entire series rests on the reaction to the pilot episode. Mathieson has done his best to leave us wanting more, though: "Hopefully you're left hanging in a good way, so you're thinking 'This has got to be a series, how could you do this to us?!' We've plotted out what we want to do in Season One and Season Two, so fingers crossed."

ALT will air on E4 towards the end of March.



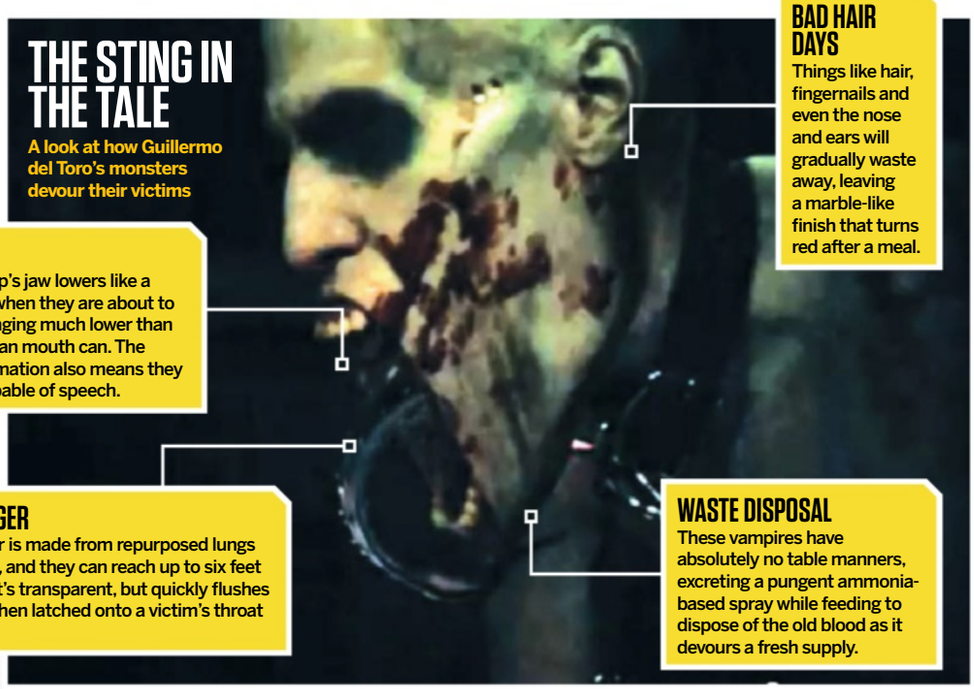
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YOU WILL BE WATCHING

3 kick-ass new shows to look out for this year

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY** INTERVIEW **STEVE NASH**





THE STING IN THE TALE

A look at how Guillermo del Toro's monsters devour their victims

JAWS
The vamp's jaw lowers like a snake's when they are about to feed, hanging much lower than any human mouth can. The transformation also means they are incapable of speech.

BAD HAIR DAYS
Things like hair, fingernails and even the nose and ears will gradually waste away, leaving a marble-like finish that turns red after a meal.

THE STINGER
The stinger is made from repurposed lungs and throat, and they can reach up to six feet in length. It's transparent, but quickly flushes dark red when latched onto a victim's throat or thigh.

WASTE DISPOSAL
These vampires have absolutely no table manners, excreting a pungent ammonia-based spray while feeding to dispose of the old blood as it devours a fresh supply.



1. THE STRAIN

Guillermo del Toro's vampire outbreak series will drain New York City dry

"Once you see *The Strain*, you will never look at vampires the same way again," says Carlton Cuse, the executive producer of Guillermo del Toro's nightmarish novel adaptation. "These are not sparkly brooding dudes with fangs and romantic problems. These vampires, or to use the Romanian word, 'Strigoi,' are really scary creatures, and this is a really original re-imagining of vampire lore."

One of the things that makes it unique is the biological make-up of these nefarious nightwalkers. They feed via a muscular stinger that snakes out of their mouth and into the victim's artery, which is formed out of repurposed body parts, lung sacs and trachea included. There's something else that sets them apart too.

"I spent a lot of time discussing with Guillermo the fact that these vampires feed and shit at the same time," he clarifies. "They have this incredibly elaborate biological mechanism that overtakes the regular human biology, and all that is detailed pretty thoroughly in the show."

In the past, Cuse was co-showrunner on *Lost*, but unlike the supernatural series that ran for six seasons seemingly with no end game, *The Strain* has a definite conclusion. "I love the fact that it is a closed-ended show," he adds. "The *Strain* trilogy is a story with a beginning, middle and end, and we are moving towards that ending. It is going to be between three and five seasons."

Creators Guillermo del Toro, Chuck Hogan
Cast Corey Stoll, David Bradley, Kevin Durand, Mía Maestro, Jonathan Hyde
Coming July 2014
Network FX

Set to star is Corey Stoll (*House Of Cards*) as Dr Ephraim 'Eph' Goodweather, the head of a Disease Control team tasked with investigating the viral outbreak that's linked to an ancient strain of vampirism. Together with Nora (*Alias*' Mía Maestro) and Jim Kent (*The Lord Of The Rings* alum Sean Astin), they lead a fight against these blood-seeking sewer dwellers.

The trilogy's original writing duo, del Toro and Chuck Hogan, have co-penned the show's pilot, which del Toro will also direct. Working with Hollywood's biggest fanboy was part of the draw for Cuse: "One of the reasons I really wanted to collaborate with Guillermo on this project was I think that he a real visionary when it comes to creating monsters and fantasy worlds," he says.

"I believe these creatures are really compelling and different from anything you've seen before. We're taking this book and turning it into 13 hours of television, so I feel the books are well represented in the show, but I think the series is a deeper and richer experience."

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2. THE LEFTOVERS

Star Trek's Damon Lindelof takes on the rapture

When 140 million people disappear, we're not left to ponder why or how; it's a case of 'what's next?' for the cast of *The Leftovers*. The new HBO series marks *Lost*'s Damon Lindelof's return to the small screen. Recently, the screenwriter has taken time out to pen blockbusters *Star Trek Into Darkness* and *World War Z*, but the adaptation of Tom Perrotta's 2011 bestseller *The Leftovers* lured him back to TV land.

"I really feel like the special brilliance of what Tom did and what we're trying to recapture in the TV show is that there's this elephant in the room of the departure," he says, referring to the show's Rapture-like event. In the Bible, this is prophesied Judgement Day where Jesus takes the Christians from Earth and leaves the rest to face God's judgement. "Is it the Rapture? Who knows? But by starting the story three years after this event, people aren't really talking about it. They're at a point now where it's like, 'We've spent three years talking about it, and now it's time to get back to our lives because this is what they are now.'"

The ten-episode run will reveal how members of a suburban neighbourhood have coped with the cataclysmic event, including turns by Justin Theroux as a police chief; Liv Tyler as a young woman targeted by a cult, and Christopher Eccleston as a former reverend. The original story was inspired by 9/11, exploring the different ways a community deals with a huge collective trauma. It's hardly light viewing, admits Lindelof: "One of the things I love about Tom's book and the premise of the show in general is that it's not necessarily for everybody," he says. "I'm sure there will be people who say that they don't like it and it's just way too intense and confusing, and other people who are completely and totally captivated by it."

Creators Damon Lindelof, Tom Perrotta
Cast Justin Theroux, Amy Brenneman, Carrie Coon, Christopher Eccleston, Ann Dowd
Coming Late 2014
Network HBO



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3. SALEM

Terra Nova's Brannon Braga on televising the witch trials

Something wicked this way comes, as new series *Salem* puts a supernatural spin on the witch trials. While history lessons taught us that they were powered by fear and paranoia, *Star Trek* veteran Brannon Braga hints that they may have been onto something: "It's an alternate history, the one you didn't know about, but we're not interested in exploiting it in that way," he says. "And in no way are we endorsing anything, exploiting or belittling the terrible social issues that were going on against women. In fact, quite the contrary."

In this re-telling, the Puritans pointing the finger are actually the real witches. Signs of being in league with the Devil include speaking in ancient tongues and using beauty to tempt the good people of Salem, and they're all based on 17th Century real-life accounts, which should help the show stand-out from the likes of *American Horror Story*.

"Good records were kept of the kinds of things people were accused of," Braga explains. "Sometimes animals. A pig went on trial for being a witch once. That's actually true. Our show is about witches. There are no vampires or werewolves, and we are hoping that our form of magic is different."

Salem's leading sorceress is Mary Sibley, played by Janet Montgomery, a bewitching but brutal woman who's made a pact with the Devil. "The only thing that could bring her back from the brink is love," he says, "so this show, in its most reductive state, is like *Wuthering Heights* meets *The Exorcist*. There's a deeply romantic river running throughout, despite all the horror."

Fringe's Seth Gabel also stars as Cotton Mather, who's leading the witch-hunt. You'll find him in the church in the day and the brothel by night, says Gabel: "Every character has something to hide. There's evil in the people that aren't witches, and there's good in the people that are."

Creators Adam Simon, Brannon Braga
Cast Janet Montgomery, Seth Gabel, Ashley Madekwe
Coming 20 April 2014
Network WGN America





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SciFiNow reveals hot new digital magazine Uncanny Comics

Like the Flash bursting from a film reel in *Showcase* #4 or the dynamic new team of misfit mutants launching from the cover of *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, the superhero status quo is going to be well and truly rocked by Uncanny Comics!

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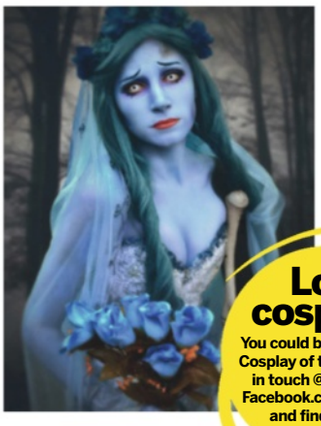
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EMILY

Corpse Bride

REAL NAME: BECKIE, AKA TIGERLILYCOSPLAY
FROM: SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND
PHOTO: © WAC PHOTOGRAPHY/TASCHA DEARING
YOUTUBE: YOUTUBE.COM/ABIGAILM28
FACEBOOK: FACEBOOK.COM/TIGERLILYCOSPLAY
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It must be hard to not only replicate animated characters, but make yourself recognisable.
One of the best ways is to approach it by thinking how you can use make-up to gain that near impossibly animated face. It often involves looking into methods of contouring to achieve a slimmer face and highlighting certain points. Along with this, try using your eyes, eyebrows and mannerisms to convey the character.

The dress is gorgeous – talk us through the process.
My mother helped me, as I was unsure how to approach it.

The dress itself was made in a short amount of time. The base was an old corset, from there I used silk paint with a sponge to get the darkened and slightly weathered effect, as well as to dye the blue frills. After, I added pearls, sequins, lace and more silk paint! The bones were made from fimo – polymer clay – with a pin hole in the middle. After painting black acrylic on the corset for the hollowed appearance, I sewed 'ribs' to it.

The skirt is silk, which was dyed to get Emily's ghostly shade and lined in to make the colour pop. The bottom was cut into triangles and gradient-dyed until it reached a darker tip, then gutter applied for the swirly effects in every Tim Burton film!

The bone arm is from an old science skeleton! Using velcro in a loop then sewing it onto the joints, I attached it to myself. I used black body paint to cover my normal arm so it didn't draw attention away.

Was the make-up much hassle?
The paint was the worst part. Luckily, I had two lovely friends – Jenny and Tuesday – who helped paint me black and blue! It took around one and half hours to do it – including the make-up on my face. Taking it off was the worst part, as the black body paint was very water-resistant – I was finding paint on my skin for the next few days!







Season One saw Ichabod's wife Katrina freed – briefly – from her exile.

RETURN OF THE UNDEAD

SPOILER ALERT!

SLEEPY HOLLOW SEASON TWO IS "VERY DIFFERENT"

Katia Winter talks Sleepy Hollow's shocking finale and more magic in the new series

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Sleepy Hollow's first season ended on one hell of a cliffhanger. Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison) was locked in a coffin, Abbie Mills (Nicole Beharie) was trapped in purgatory, and Katrina Crane (Katia Winter) was freed, only to be taken away by the Headless Horseman, all thanks to Henry Parrish (John Noble), or Jeremy Crane, aka War.

"I knew the twist fairly early on," laughs Winter, "but to see him, because he has such a long speech at the very end, when we're strapped to those trees, it's great. [Noble] is such a lovely person, then he just switches it on and he turns evil!"

Provided she can escape the Horseman's clutches, Katrina will be facing some of the same out-of-time issues as Ichabod, but Winter tells us she'll be more prepared. "She's been around, I think she has a better understanding of how the world works and she can use magic if her stuff doesn't work! If she doesn't know how to switch on the coffee machine she'll just make it switch on somehow, I'm sure! I definitely want to see her use more magic in Season Two." However, she tells that she's not as attached to her corsets as Ichabod is to his coat. "That would be a more interesting transition, because it's hard for me to walk around in 18th Century clothes!" she laughs.

> "SEASON TWO IS GOING TO BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM SEASON ONE"
> KATIA WINTER

Magic aside, Winter hints that the dark ending of Season One won't be wrapped up quickly. "Season Two is going to be very different from Season One judging by the final episode."

Sleepy Hollow will be available on Blu-ray and DVD from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.



MORGANA WITH FANGS

Dracula's Nonso Anozie talks Season Two hopes and vamping up Katie McGrath

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

The fate of NBC's *Dracula* is in limbo at the time of writing, but Nonso Anozie, who plays Renfield in this reimagining, is looking ahead to Season Two, and anticipates spending more time in the company of a different bloodsucker. "There's probably going to be more scenes with Katie McGrath, who plays Lucy," he tells SciFiNow.

McGrath's character has followed a similar path to *Merlin*'s Morgana, with Lucy taken down a dark path. In the penultimate episode she was turned into a vampire by Renfield's master. "It'll be interesting to see what happens," teases Anozie. It will indeed, especially given that she shares Grayson (Jonathan Rhys Meyers)' love for Mina (Jessica de Gouw).



Actor Nonso Anozie approves of the direction his character, Renfield, is going.

However, Anozie tells us that fan favourite Renfield will continue to stand fast. "Renfield has proven that he's loyal to the last," he tells us. "It's the other characters that you have to worry about. Renfield's not going anywhere soon."

Loyalty is one thing, but fans of the show have been clamouring for Renfield to put his pen down for a proper fight sequence. "I definitely would love to do more," agrees Anozie. "Renfield would be really stirring in the action scenes, I think he could hold his own in a fight. I'm very keen to see what happens next season."

CONTROVERSY

The scene where Lucy sleeps with Harker was edited in such a way in its UK broadcast that it appeared the lesbian character enjoyed it. Viewers naturally took offence, and creator Cole Haddon apologised on Twitter, saying, "Lucy should not have appeared to enjoy the experience." Writer Harley Peyton tweeted that it was "A mistake born of several mistakes." It was subsequently cut differently for the US.

Dracula Season One is available now on DVD and Blu-ray.

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TRIVIA THE CHARACTER OF FRANK IRVING IN *SLEEPY HOLLOW* IS A NOD TO ORIGINAL WRITER WASHINGTON IRVING.

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WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

THRONE OF BLOOD

AFTER WHAT WAS QUITE POSSIBLY THE MOST DEVASTATING SEASON TO DATE, WHERE CAN GAME OF THRONES GO FROM HERE? WE TALK TO THE CAST ABOUT HOW NOBODY IS SAFE, AND WHY THEY LIKE IT THAT WAY...

LAST YEAR, WESTEROS WAS DROWNING IN BLOOD, AND WE LOOKED ON IN HORROR AS GEORGE RR MARTIN'S WORLD WAS TORN APART BY MORE DEATH THAN IT HAD EVER seen. It was as if the showrunners had taken a butcher's knife to the show, gutting the cast list and reminding us that no one is safe.

"It's a wonderful thing," Thomas Brodie-Sangster (Bran Stark's spiritual guide Jojen Reed) tells us. "I think it's healthy for the show to just chop their way through people's favourite characters. It's great, and it's not done enough in film and TV. I think it's brilliant."

Season Three was arguably as tough as *Game Of Thrones* has been on its characters and viewers. Figures who had a comeuppance due, such as Theon Greyjoy (Alfie Allen), had their bad behaviour paid back with brutal savagery, in his case being tortured and castrated by the sadistic Ramsay Snow (Iwan Rheon). Characters were moved around like pieces on a chessboard, only to be dispatched when their masters felt it necessary, like poor Ros (Esmé Bianco), handed over to the sadistic King Joffrey (Jack Gleeson) for use as target practice by the scheming Littlefinger (Aiden Gillen). Most brutal of all was the Red Wedding, which decimated the Stark family and took Catelyn (Michelle Fairley), Robb (Richard Madden) and his pregnant wife Talisa (Oona Chaplin) away from us in horrific fashion.

You may wonder how *Game Of Thrones* could possibly maintain this level of shock and awe, but anyone who's read the books will tell you that there's plenty more to come. What is perhaps more impressive is that the cast seemed to be just as shell-shocked by the events of the season as the rest of us.

"I was like, 'No, it's not happening now, it's a dream! They'll just wake up and it's like "Ah, it's a dream!"' Like in *Dallas*!" exclaims Sibel Kekilli, who plays Tyrion's faithful but strong-willed lover Shae. "I read it in the script and I thought 'No, they're not doing that to the people, because the fans love the family.'"

Not all of the cast are so easily taken aback, however. Wildlings are made ➤



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GAME OF THRONES

Throne Of Blood



© Photo by Ian Derry

The Witch And The Pirate

Liam Cunningham and Carice van Houten talk Jack Russells and Lords of Light



"You don't have a favourite animal," interrupts Cunningham as van Houten tells a story about struggling with horse-riding. There's a brief pause before he adds, "Apart from Davos."

Their back and forth couldn't be more different from their combative relationship as Davos Seaworth, the good-hearted pirate who's short a few fingers, and Melisandre, the fire priestess who's more than prepared to drop leeches onto a naked young man. Speaking of leeches, van Houten says she was thrilled to commit such an outrageously grotesque act.

"I'm like, 'Oh yes!'" she grins. "I love that extreme stuff. That's why the show is so great, the scenes are so thick and so well-written and meaty. A few were fake. There were some that looked like Dutch jelly worms." And as for the real ones? "They were pretty big. I didn't like to put them on his body."

As for Davos, he spent most of the last season in a prison cell awaiting execution, but Cunningham explains that there's no way Davos would leave Stannis. "I think of him as Jiminy Cricket, he's the conscience of Stannis," he tells us. "There's a purity to Davos, and even if Stannis is throwing him in jail he's got to sit there and go 'As soon as he comes round I'll show him the error of his ways.' But he wants to do it the right way, and he doesn't think this woman is honourable."

However, the Lord of Light has different plans. "There is a bit of a turn-up when it looks like I'm going to be killed, and a certain Red Woman saves his life," remembers Cunningham.

"We need him to fight the war that's to come," explains van Houten. "It's not that I like him, but I'm so happy as an actor that he's still alive. I love having him around."

"I'm like a small Jack Russell," adds Cunningham. "She'll be trying to put a lead on me in the next season."







ABOVE: ARYA STARK AND SANDOR CLEGANE **BELOW LEFT:** TYWIN LANNISTER (CHARLES DANCE) WILL CONTINUE TO SCHEME FOR HIS FAMILY **BELOW RIGHT:** DAENERYS TARGARYEN (EMILIA CLARKE) AND DAARIO NAHARIS (MICHIEL HUISMAN)

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> of sterner stuff, as Natalia Tena (who plays Bran's guardian Osha) explains. "I read the books, so I knew what was going to happen," she grins. "I was quite excited, because I wanted to see how it was done. Oona's one of my best mates, I was really sad that she was leaving. But I wanted her to be more pregnant, I think you could have done it more gruesome! That's my take on it!"

Reading the books may be one thing, but as the series has progressed we've seen showrunners David Benioff and DB Weiss start to wander just a little from the source material. There hasn't been anything too major, but with the series beginning to shuffle events from the novels around, it's hardly surprising that the cast feel uneasy. Blood will have to be spilled to answer for the Red Wedding, the political furnace of King's Landing is surely ready to explode, and the actors must be wondering who's next on the chopping block.

"Everyone always says the first thing they do is flick through the scripts to check they're not dead," laughs Isaac Hempstead-Wright, who plays the increasingly gifted Bran Stark. "But David and Dan often do jokes with the scripts, so for instance Alfie got sent a script where I jump out, stab him and kill him, and he sent me a text saying 'You kill me!' That was a joke."

"EVERYONE ALWAYS SAYS THE FIRST THING THEY DO IS FLICK THROUGH THE SCRIPTS TO CHECK THEY'RE NOT DEAD"

ISAAC HEMPSTEAD-WRIGHT

NIKOLAJ COSTER-WALDAU KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT CHARACTERS TAKING A DRASTIC TURN. JAIME LANNISTER LOST A HAND IN SEASON THREE, BUT SEEMED TO gain a soul in its place, as he realised he cared for his captor Brienne of Tarth (Gwendoline Christie) more than he thought. With his sword hand gone, however, Jaime faces the difficult task of fitting back into the Lannister clan in Season Four. You'd be forgiven for thinking that Jaime has been through enough, but nothing is ever certain.

"I might end up like one of those Monty Python characters!" he muses, briefly conjuring the image of *Holy Grail*'s Black Knight. However, he's remarkably at ease with the notion of Jaime potentially being sent to an early grave. "It's great to be part of and I'm so grateful. It's wonderful, but it's a television show. It's a job, it's a fantastic job, and it's going to end one day. I would love to be part of it to the end, I love working with these people, it's just amazing… but it's a television show."

Even when George RR Martin came on set, Coster-Waldau refused to allow himself to ask about where Jaime might end up. "I think you stop yourself from asking the obvious question," he smiles. "Which is, 'Am I going to live to the end?' It becomes very bland. That's what you really want to know, so it's just, 'Did you watch the game?'" However, Kekilli tells us that she wasn't quite so restrained. "I just said 'Please don't kill me,'" she reveals. "'If you ever think that, don't, and if you do, let me come back as a zombie.' And he said 'Yes Sibel, of course.'"

It's possible that Coster-Waldau's laid-back attitude simply comes from the fact that there's no way of knowing where >







ABOVE: TYRION LANNISTER (PETER DINKLAGE) AND SHAE (SIBEL KEKILLI) **BELOW LEFT:** SAMWELL TARLY (JOHN BRADLEY) WILL BE FIGHTING TO HOLD THE WALL **RIGHT:** JON SNOW (KIT HARINGTON) WILL BE JOINING HIM

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the path for many of these characters leads. With the penultimate novel *The Winds Of Winter* at least a year away, the fates of so many of our favourites remain a mystery. "Certainly it's one of the interesting things about the show, the fact that we're not sure," opines Liam Cunningham, whose honourable pirate Davos Seaworth has now cheated death more than once. "We know a little a bit about our history, but we don't know what our motivations are. And because they're wavering away from the novels, in a sense it discloses itself to us as it does the audience. There is a real organic nature to it which is really cool."

"I think I have a great part, and it's still evolving," agrees Carice van Houten. The Dutch actress plays red priestess Melisandre, who surprised many of us when she told Stannis Baratheon (Stephen Dillane) not to execute Davos for releasing potential sacrifice victim Gendry (Joe Dempsie). "It's still in development and it's a mystery. No one is black and white, that's why none of the characters are boring and none of the storylines are boring. I love it that the female parts in the show are so strong. It's not that they're the wives sitting at home in the castles with the babies; they're very cool, strong characters. I don't have red eyes [like her character in the novels] because otherwise she becomes like a Roger Rabbit… ["Jessica Rabbit," Cunningham corrects] and it's got to make her a little bit more human, I think."

THE INTRODUCTION OF JESSICA RABBIT INTO THE DISCUSSION IS FITTING, AS THE DEBATE ABOUT GAME OF THRONES' TREATMENT OF WOMEN RAGED ON INTO ITS THIRD SEASON and promises to continue. However, the cast believe very firmly that the series is not guilty of the accusations levelled against it. Van Houten has done her fair share of disrobing as Melisandre, and tells us that the nudity is serving a purpose. "Of course, it has to be functional, and it mostly is, and if it's not then you discuss and you find a way," she explains. "But in general I want to say that's what I like about the show, not the sex per se, but nudity is part of life. We can see machine guns, but we cannot see a fucking nipple? I don't get it. I really have to make a point here. Who sleeps with their bra on? It's annoying! Sorry, maybe that's a Dutch approach, but I think we have to get used to it a little bit, it's part of life, man. Bodies."

"If there were not hugely strong female characters in this like yourself…" begins Cunningham, "…it would be sexist," concludes Van Houten.

"To have that kind of stuff it has to be earned, otherwise it's just gratuitous," he continues. "But some of the most dangerous characters in this show are women. They're extraordinarily well-rounded and well-drawn. I think there's a level of intelligence required by the viewer or whoever is watching this, and it doesn't patronise, and it shows the dark side and the bright side of humanity. It's inclusive, it's not just the strong man and the woman as this stay-at-home, or she's there to be a hostage. [Melisandre] is not functional; she's fucking dangerous in this show and has to be watched, as in real life! And I think that's the reason. If the violence and the sex wasn't in the show then that would be patronising, I think."

The number of dangerous people in *Game Of Thrones* goes some way to accounting for the outrageously high body count. If the end of Season Three

Smoke And Mirrors

How the Shadow Baby was born

Any conversation with Liam Cunningham and Carice van Houten about the strangest things they've done on *Game Of Thrones* will inevitably turn to the second season episode 'Garden Of Bones'. "Well," begins Van Houten, "I gave birth to a shadow baby."

"Yeah, that was weird, man," Cunningham remembers. ""I tried to explain it to someone who had never seen the show. I could see his head turn, and he said 'What the hell are you talking about?'"

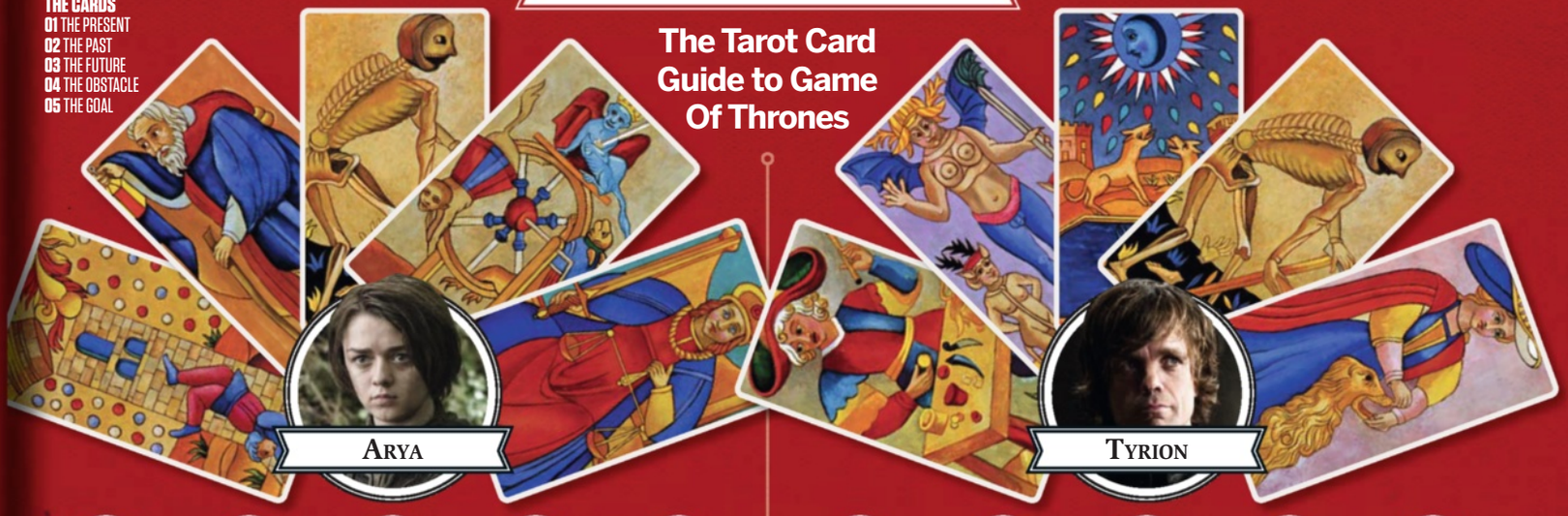
As shocking as the scene is to watch, Van Houten tells us that shooting it wasn't exactly the most pleasurable experience. "You're in a real cave and it's real cold."

"Because Carice had a prosthetic belly on, it was freezing cold, there were guys behind her pressing things to make her belly turn, she was virtually naked, it was the middle of the night, and this cave we were in was open at both ends, so there was a breeze going through that would cut you in two," adds Cunningham. "I had about ten layers on and I was chilly, and she was giving birth to the thing that wasn't there. The level of concentration needed to make this believable is a real credit to her, and she hardly complained at all!"

Game of Death

The Tarot Card Guide to Game Of Thrones

THE CARDS
01 THE PRESENT
02 THE PAST
03 THE FUTURE
04 THE OBSTACLE
05 THE GOAL



Arya

01 THE TOWER
Arya thought that she had finally found her family, only to have her hope snatched away from her. The Red Wedding has left her more determined to take bloody vengeance than ever.

02 THE HERMIT
Always seeing herself as an outsider, Arya had more in common with Jon Snow than any of her other siblings. Her instincts are to go it alone, but she will need help if she is to survive.

03 DEATH
The third season finale saw Arya kill a Frey soldier in cold blood and say the words 'Valar Morghulis'. The lessons taught by Jaqen H'ghar will not have been wasted; she has her kill list.

04 WHEEL OF FORTUNE
Due to her status as a Stark and her age, she's been hurled to and from different groups. She must take control of her destiny if she is going to get what she wants.

05 JUSTICE
Somebody needs to make the Lannisters pay for what they have done. So much Stark blood has been spilled; it's about time that the scales were balanced. Could Arya be the one to do this?

Tyrion

01 THE MAGICIAN
Resourceful to the last, Tyrion has managed to keep himself, Shae and Sansa alive through some trying times. Now that he's in charge of the kingdom's finances, more wizardry will be required.

02 THE DEVIL
The reason Tyrion has had to work so hard to keep himself and his loved ones safe is King Joffrey, whose growing psychosis and personal dislike for Tyrion makes him more and more dangerous.

03 THE MOON
Tyrion's future in King's Landing is unclear. He's done as his father asked by marrying Sansa, but no one is safe. With so much uncertainty, there's plenty of worry and doubt.

04 DEATH
The reason for Tyrion's constant concern isn't just the horror of his nephew. He's tied to his monstrous family, even though he's aware of how heinous their actions are.

05 STRENGTH
There's great strength inside Tyrion, as he demonstrated when he refused to bed Sansa in front of the entire court on his wedding night. His growing sense of moral duty could be his salvation.

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LEFT: OBERYN MARTELL (PEDRO PASCAL) AND HIS PARAMOUR ELLARIA SAND (INDIRA VARMA) **ABOVE RIGHT:** THE NOTORIOUS KING JOFFREY **BELOW LEFT:** YGRITTE (ROSE LESLIE) AND FELLOW WILDLING TORMUND (KRISTOFER HIVJU)



"I WANTED TALISA TO BE MORE PREGNANT, I THINK YOU COULD HAVE DONE IT MORE GRUESOME!"

NATALIE TENA





DAENERYS

01 THE WORLD
Daenerys' conquest shows no sign of slowing down. After gaining the allegiance of the Second Sons and claiming the city of Yunkai, she appears to be unstoppable.

02 STRENGTH
Since her marriage to Khal Drogo, Daenerys has been unflinching in her determination to claim the Iron Throne. With each victory her power and her armies grow.

03 THE CHARIOT
With the Unsullied behind her and Daario Naharis being added to her Queensguard, Daenerys' campaign looks set to continue. However, we all know what pride comes before.

04 THE LOVERS
Daario's commitment to Daenerys comes in large part due to him seeing her in a romantic light. With a growing number of men devoted to her, will it be long before the Queen takes a lover?

05 TEMPERANCE
Daenerys has never been shy of making her enemies feel her wrath, but she's rarely acted rashly either. She balances the advice of her companions with her own sense of right and wrong.

JON

01 THE HERMIT
Jon's journey has been about self-discovery as much as anything else. He had to make tough choices about loyalty, love and loss, and his commitment to the Night's Watch is clear.

02 THE LOVERS
Jon fell hard for Wildling Ygritte, but their love was not to be. Despite their obviously strong feelings for each other, he couldn't bring himself to kill an innocent man and she shot him full of arrows.

03 THE MAGICIAN
Although Jon has been put through a lot, he has managed to return to the Night's Watch with his life. He will surely be an invaluable asset due to his determination and focus.

04 THE HANGED MAN
Sacrifice is something that Jon knows a lot about. He gave up his freedom to take the black, killed Qhorin Halfhand and gave up his love for Ygritte. It all needs to be for something.

05 THE EMPEROR
If Jon fulfils his potential then he could prove to be a strong leader. He's got his half-brother Robb's morals, and has proved himself in combat. The Night's Watch is lucky to have him.

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is anything to go by, it's that the worst kind of dangerous people are winning. Hempstead-Wright's Bran is the last of a dying breed, one of the few unambiguously good people in Westeros. With his (fictional) parents and big brother murdered, you might have thought that the young actor would be slightly resentful of the villains' continued success.

"I quite like it," he counters. "I think shows where the good guys always win are a little bit tedious; without some sort of opposite force nothing really happens. We all love to hate a bad guy. You just have to look at Joffrey and you loathe him! *Game Of Thrones* would be nothing without its bad guys."

"You need to feel a bit uncomfortable," agrees Brodie-Sangster. "You can't think that everything will be OK, because it often isn't. What makes it exciting to read and watch is that you don't know what's going to happen to your favourite characters, they could have their heads chopped off or the bad guy might prevail. That's brilliant, because you don't know what's going to happen. You can't predict it."

Bran and Jojen's storyline has been moved forward relatively slowly over the course of the third season, as the young Stark took the advice of his mentor to develop his magical powers. Although Bran used his abilities to control Hodor (Kristian Nairn) in the season finale, Hempstead-Wright tells us that there's no reason to believe Bran's optimistic outlook will falter.

"I think because Bran is so totally reliant on other people – Hodor or Osha or Jojen – he's had to trust people, and he can't afford to be the Arya type: 'I don't trust anyone, I'm going to kill everyone,'" he explains. "But I think he has grown up in a sense where he's sensed that he can't really be absolutely trusting, because half his family have been slaughtered through being too trusting. And definitely in seasons to come he'll start to take on a bit more responsibilty for his own self."

"IF THE VIOLENCE AND THE SEX WASN'T IN THE SHOW THAT WOULD BE PATRONISING"

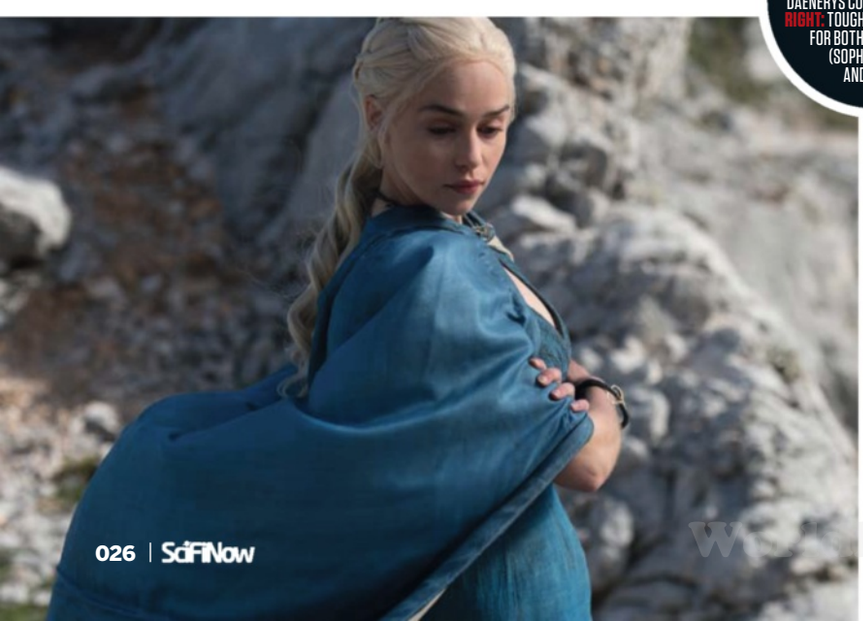


LIAM CUNNINGHAM

SPEAKING OF ARYA, WE LAST SAW HER MURDER A FREY SOLDIER AND WHISPER "VALAR MORGHULIS" AS THE HOUND (RORY MCCANN) LOOKED ON. THE VENGEFUL young girl and the irascible warrior were at each other's throats all season, but actress Maisie Williams tells us that Season Four will see their relationship develop into something less violent – at least, the violence won't be directed at each other.

"I think they don't want to kill each other anymore," she tells us. "They're not friends either, but they've come to this uneasy truce where they're not deliberately trying to make it unpleasant for each other, and they're just trying to get along. I think it is a really interesting relationship, and we do see it change a little bit after [Season Three] Episode Nine. We see the Hound accepting Arya a little bit and Arya realising that actually he is a pretty good person to be with in this world. He's doing something right, as hundreds of people are terrified of him. As much as she's loyal to the stuff she learned from Syrio Forel and that right way of killing people, I think she's realising that at the end of the day, you need to get the job done, and that's what he's very good at. The development of Arya and the Hound's relationship is really exciting this year."







LEFT: MARGAERY TYRELL (NATALIE DORMER) WITH GRANDMOTHER OLENNA (DIANA RIGG) **BELOW LEFT:** DAENERYS CONTEMPLATES RULE **RIGHT:** TOUGH TIMES ARE AHEAD FOR BOTH SANSA STARK (SOPHIE TURNER) AND TYRION

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Give The Man A Hand

Nikolaj Coster-Waldau remembers bear pits and beatings

It's fair to say that the turning point for Jaime Lannister in Season Three was the moment he decided to risk his life for Brienne by jumping in to help her fight a bear. "The bear was called Bart the Bear the Second," Nikolaj Coster-Waldau grins. "We were shooting this outside Los Angeles, and he would arrive on set in his trailer. Well, it was a cage on wheels really, and the whole crew had to be ready outside, and for him to come out of his cage everybody had to cheer."

As country and western music played, the full-grown performing bear would amble out and take his position. "Bart would come out and sniff the air, and they would bring in whipped cream. He was big. They aren't scary, are they; they seem so cosy."

Although Bart may have looked friendly, Coster-Waldau was made aware of the precautions that had been taken in case the bear turned nasty. "The safety thing was this little piece of wire, and it was attached to something like a car battery," he laughs.

As scary as the experience was, Coster-Waldau tells us that it was more fun than shooting the loss of his hand. "That night we shot that scene I got sick, so it was perfect," he reveals. "They built this huge knife and they built a version so [Noah Taylor] could whack it down. Of course, he would have to be very accurate, and he wasn't always accurate. It was good for the reaction. He went for it, but it's good."

It wasn't the only time that Taylor missed his mark. "There was another day where I fall off the horse and he beats me. It was so muddy, there was so much mud everywhere, and he had to kick me in the stomach, which isn't dangerous at all, but you have to be a little specific about where you hit. Because it was so muddy and we were rolling around, he missed and hit my rib, which took me about a month to get over. That's why they cut to [Gwendoline Christie] laughing. They had to reshoot that three times, 'Gwen, Brienne shouldn't be laughing.'"





Arya and the Hound aren't the only ones with a developing partnership. Somewhere during the course of their journey together, Jaime realised that he had come to depend on Brienne and, more than that, felt protective of her, so much so that he jumped into a bear pit to defend her. However, with Jaime back with his family, will this change of heart stick, or will we see him go back to pushing small children out of windows?

"It's all about points of view," he laughs. "He still wants to sleep with his sister! When you see him first, if you were told before the scene in episode one where he's having sex with Cersei and he pushes Bran out of the window, if you had the information before that, yes it's his sister, but it's true love, it's the love of his life and they desperately want to be together. It's horrible, but it's romantic love, and if you were then told that there's a horrible little evil boy climbing the walls, if that little horrible boy tells anyone what he saw they would have to kill Cersei's lovely children, and she would die, the love of his life would die, and he would probably die as well. If you were told that, maybe you would think differently. He does something because he's all about loyalty and family, and he wants to protect the people he loves. And that goes through, I think, to Brienne."

"The big question, of course, is what happens when he gets back to King's Landing. That's where you're going to find out how it's actually changed him," Coster-Waldau teases. "The Lannister family is together for the first time really on the show, and that was really interesting to explore. I think at the end of Season Three something has changed, but he doesn't know what that is and he surprises himself. He doesn't understand, I think, really why he goes back and rescues her from that bear, and that surprises him, because she's such a pain. I think the fact is that he sees himself in that woman, he sees what he used to be when he was younger, the honesty and the loyalty and the trustworthiness."

The reluctance to give out any specific details is understandable, especially given how powerful the surprise of the Red Wedding was. What everyone seems keen to tell us is that unlike previous seasons, Season Four won't make us wait until the penultimate episode to take our breath away.

"It's a very dramatic season," Coster-Waldau tells us. "Where before you had one or two episodes that kind of peaked, I think there are a lot more peaks here. It's like one of the hardest stages of the Tour de France."

"It's going to be kicking off early," enthuses Cunningham. "It's really dramatic, and as opposed to the one climax of other seasons, there'll be several. It's bigger, bolder and brassier, and I'm dying to see it, because it's going to be different this season."

Game of Thrones: The Complete Third Season is out now on DVD and Blu-ray from HBO Home Entertainment. Season Four begins on 7 April on Sky Atlantic.

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BEWARE SEASON ONE SPOILERS!

30 MOST SHOCKING MOMENTS IN GAME OF THRONES

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

FROM ITS VERY FIRST EPISODE, GAME OF THRONES ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS ONE OF THE MOST PROVOCATIVE AND DARING SHOWS ON TV. JOIN US AS WE COUNT DOWN THE TEN MOST SHOCKING MOMENTS OF EACH SEASON SO FAR...



SEASON ONE'S BIGGEST SHOCKS

01 NED KEEPS HIS WORD

EPISODE NINE, 'BAELOR'

In terms of pure, slack-jawed surprise, nothing on *Game Of Thrones* has come close to matching the fate that is met by Sean Bean's Ned Stark. He was our identification point, the lead character and moral centre in a violent, murky and dishonourable world. His imprisonment was a shock, but there was every reason to think that Ned could somehow find his way out of it. In fact, there was every reason to believe that Ned could somehow keep his head, right up until the very moment that Joffrey ordered the executioner to bring the sword down. It was a brutal message to viewers that nobody was safe.

02 A CROWN FOR A KING

EPISODE SIX, 'A GOLDEN CROWN'

A nasty end for Viserys Targaryen had been on the cards for a while, but things came to a head when he realised just how powerful younger sister Daenerys had become. He wanted to leave with her, demanding the crown that he was promised, only to discover that Drogo had one for him, and a form-fitting one to boot. Daenerys standing by as her brother has a cauldron of boiling gold poured over his head is fantastically cold, as is her brief eulogy: "He was no dragon. Fire cannot kill a dragon."





03 IT'S NOT ABOUT HONOUR

EPISODE SIX, 'A GOLDEN CROWN'

Facing the prospect of being thrown through the Eyrie's Sky Door, Tyrion offers a Lannister debt to anyone who'll fight on his behalf. Quick-witted mercenary Bronn steps up, and promptly establishes his character: an incredibly gifted swordsman with no morals who will willingly cheat when he has to. "You did not fight with honour!" exclaims Lady Arryn. No, he certainly did not. He did win though, and a partnership was born.

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HEART OF A STALLION

EPISODE SIX, 'A GOLDEN CROWN'

04

When it's revealed that the Khaleesi is with child, she has to go through a pregnancy ritual. Naturally, if you want your child to have the strength of a stallion, you have to eat the heart of a stallion. Raw. Drogo looks proudly on as Dany chews her way through the bleeding organ, and our hearts (and stomachs) went out to her. It was gruesome and stomach-turning, but also another strong reminder of her unflinching dedication.

WEDDING NIGHT

EPISODE ONE, 'WINTER IS COMING'

05

It's safe to say that any discussion of whether or not *Game Of Thrones* was a sexist or even misogynist show began with the treatment of Daenerys at the hands of her new husband Drogo on their wedding night.



Daenerys' unwillingness is as clear as Drogo's insistence, which frankly means this first union between the two characters is a rape. Subsequently, their union becomes a partnership, which is why it's so strange that this scene was staged as an assault.

UNACCEPTABLE BREASTFEEDING

EPISODE FIVE, 'THE WOLF AND THE LION'

06

The rumblings that Lysa Arryn was not entirely with it proved entirely correct when Catelyn Stark arrived with her prisoner Tyrion in tow at the Eyrie to ask her sister for help. If proof was needed that there was more than geography separating Lysa and the eminently sensible Catelyn, it was soon given when we were forced to witness the Lady of the Vale breastfeeding her son Robin, who is of an age where 'creepy' doesn't quite cover it.



DEFENESTRATION

EPISODE ONE, 'WINTER IS COMING'

07

After the not-insignificant shock of seeing Jaime and Cersei Lannister in the throes of incestuous passion, the first episode took our breath away as the brother and sister chose a brutal way to solve the problem of being discovered by scrappy little wall-climber Bran Stark. The 11-year-old boy freezes as Jaime approaches him and declares "The things I do for love," before pushing him out of the window. From this point, there was no doubt about what the frosty Lannister clan was capable of.



YOU CAN'T TRUST ANYONE



EPISODE SEVEN, 'YOU WIN OR YOU DIE'

08

Littlefinger explicitly told Ned Stark not to trust anyone in King's Landing, and why on earth would you trust a man who you know has feelings for your wife? It's this kind of naïveté that leads Ned to believe he can just go ahead and expose the terrible secret of Joffrey's incestuous ancestry, and Littlefinger knows which side will offer the biggest reward. "I did warn you not to trust me," he hisses with his knife to Ned's throat.



KHAL DROGO WINS TO LOSE

EPISODE TEN, 'FIRE AND BLOOD'

09

Drogo had never been defeated in battle, he'd poured molten gold over the head of an irritant who displeased him, and it's just another example of his bad-assdom when he challenges one his men to a duel after being accused of being brainwashed by his "foreign whore." Although he wins, vengeful slave Mirri Maz Duur poisons his wound, and Daenerys ends up smothering the love of her life with a pillow. It was a sorry end for him, but marked another step in his wife's development.



HERE BE DRAGONS. ACTUAL DRAGONS

EPISODE TEN, 'FIRE AND BLOOD'

10

The end of Season One was incredibly tough on Daenerys, as she had sacrificed her unborn child in a failed attempt to save her husband's life. When she placed her dragon eggs on Drogo's funeral pyre, we weren't sure what to expect, even less so when she stepped into the fire herself. However, she emerged – a little sooty but more glorious than ever – with her three baby dragons. The much-talked about monsters were finally here.

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BEWARE SEASON TWO SPOILERS!

SEASON TWO'S BIGGEST SHOCKS





11 BATTLE OF THE BLACKWATER

EPISODE NINE, 'BLACKWATER'

Tyrion's masterplan to defeat Stannis Baratheon's forces against overwhelming odds was one of the most jaw-dropping sequences that the show had ever delivered. The deadly wildfire that had been laced throughout the Blackwater was set alight, decimating Stannis' fleet in an inferno of green flames. It was beautifully staged carnage of the kind that we hadn't really seen before on *Game Of Thrones*, and our hopes that Joffrey would finally be forced off the Iron Throne and straight to hell were dashed.

12 "DO YOU HAVE ANY NOTION OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CITY IS SACKED?"

EPISODE NINE, 'BLACKWATER'

Game Of Thrones has never been shy about using the threat of sexual assault to demonstrate how dangerous the world of the show is. As Stannis' forces approach King's Landing, Sansa Stark becomes Cersei's drinking companion, and is told what will happen if the city should fall, namely that "these fine women should be in for a bit of a rape." Watching the Queen Regent prepare to kill her son Tommen rather than allow him to be taken is one of the season's more surprisingly heart-rending moments.



13 DAENERYS GETS WHAT SHE CAME FOR

EPISODE TEN, 'VALAR MORGHULIS'

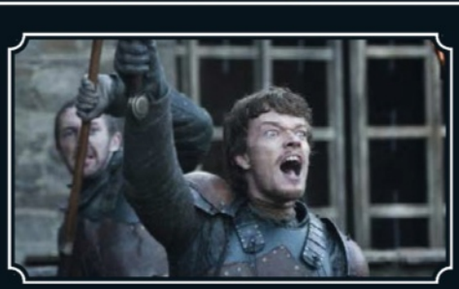
When her babies are taken from her, Daenerys is forced to go to the House of the Undying to reclaim them. Visions of Drogo that were meant to force her to linger instead led to greedy warlock Pyat Pree's doom. Dany orders her dragons to roast the creepy magician alive, before locking the treacherous, lying Xaro and her backstabbing handmaiden Doreah inside the richest man in Qarth's empty vault and gets her mission back on track.



14 WHITE WALKERS

EPISODE TEN, 'BLACKWATER'

The White Walkers were the unseen horror of the winter that we kept being told was coming. Season Two ended with our first clear look at these monsters, and what a look it was. It's a superbly staged horror sequence, as Samwell Tarly, Grenn and Dolorous Edd hear the warning horns. One blast means Jon Snow and Qhorin Halfhand returning, and two means Wildlings. They draw their swords, but a third blast strikes terror into them: White Walkers. Grenn and Edd flee, leaving Sam to cower as the undead army heads south.



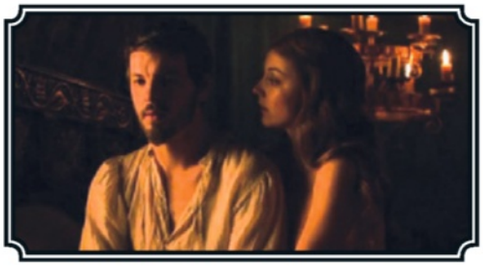
15 THEON NEVER REALLY WINS

EPISODE SIX, 'THE OLD GODS AND THE NEW'

We had spent most of the first season watching Theon Greyjoy embrace everything and everyone that being in the possession of the Starks offered him, but when he was confronted with his father's disappointment, Theon decided to act. He stormed Winterfell, killed two children – claiming that they were Bran and Rickon Stark – and turned his back on the people who he had sworn fealty to. Watching Theon fall from grace was both horrifying and oddly moving, as his need to be loved continued to show through.



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16 MARGAERY TYRELL IS NO FOOL

EPISODE THREE, 'WHAT IS DEAD MAY NEVER DIE'

There's no reason to be overly impressed by Margaery Tyrell at first. How bright could she be if she's marrying Renly Baratheon, a man whose sexuality seems to be Westeros's worst-kept secret? However, on their wedding night she reveals that she knows all about him, including his love for her brother, even offering to leave and fetch Loras herself. This is our first hint of Margaery's willingness to do whatever it takes to reach the Iron Throne.



18 IT'S A RIOT

EPISODE SIX, 'THE OLD GODS AND THE NEW'

Joffrey's heinousness had largely gone unpunished until he and his royal retinue pass through a crowd of starving civilians. It's not long until one of his subjects heaves a handful of cow dung at the king, and a full-blown riot gets underway as Joffrey orders his men to kill everyone. Sandor 'The Hound' Clegane's actions are just as shocking, rescuing Sansa from a gang of rapists and revealing that there is a heart somewhere underneath his merciless façade.

17 CHANGING FACE

EPISODE TEN, 'VALAR MORGHULIS'

With Arya Stark a prisoner of Tywin Lannister, the mysterious Jaqen H'ghar offered her a handy payment in return for saving his life: he would kill any three people she asked him to. An impossible feat, but a man was uniquely talented at appearing and disappearing without a trace, and in the season finale we discovered why. After offering Arya the opportunity to join him in Braavos to become one of the Faceless Men, we see how they get their name, as he turns around with a completely new identity.





19 JON SNOW'S STRATEGIC BETRAYAL

EPISODE TEN, 'VALAR MORGHULIS'

It's obvious that fiery Ygritte is going to be nothing but trouble, and it's not long before Jon Snow and his commander Qhorin Halfhand become Wildling prisoners. Qhorin realises the potential for Jon to become a spy for the Night's Watch, and urges him to play the part, forcing his hand by attacking him. When Jon runs Qhorin through, he whispers "We are the Watchers on the Wall." Notions of honour and sacrifice suddenly gained real meaning, and the impact on Jon was clear.

20 DEMON SMOKE BABY

EPISODE FOUR, 'GARDEN OF BONES'

Stannis places his faith in fire priestess Melisandre to take care of his younger brother Renly, and she shuffles the man who would be king off the mortal coil. Right-hand man Davos Seaworth looks on in horror as she gives birth to some kind of smoke demon that slays Renly in his tent. These small glimpses of magic and horror remind us that anything is possible.





IMPISH WIT
The wit and wisdom of Tyrion Lannister

*"I am the **god** of tits and wine"*

*"You love your children. It's your one redeeming quality – **that and your cheekbones**"*

"Those are brave men knocking at our door. **Let's go kill them!"**

*"**Death is so final**, yet life is full of possibilities"*

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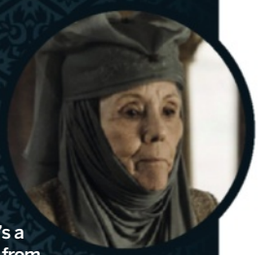
BEWARE SEASON THREE SPOILERS!

AHEAD OF THE GAME

Our top 5 fan favourites

OLENNA TYRELL

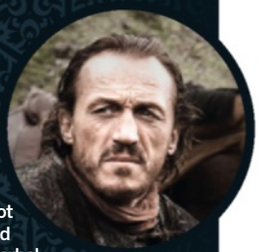
Diana Rigg



1 The grandmother of Margaery and Loras Tyrell is an acid-tongued, astute and mostly humane figure who can see what her grandchildren are getting themselves into. It's a tremendous performance from an actress who is clearly having a terrific amount of fun.

BRONN

Jerome Flynn



2 Tyrion's sellsword walks a fine line. He's brutal, heartless and completely lacking in morals, but sharp enough to recognise his own shortcomings. He's not hired to be pious; he's hired to be dangerous, and his verbal sparring with Tyrion is second to none.

VARYS

Conleth Hill



3 Varys is the most intriguing schemer at King's Landing. He's politically adept, but his conversations with Tyrion reveal a surprising morality, even if it is mostly suppressed. He's also got a knack for revenge, as the fate of the sorcerer who turned him into a eunuch reveals.

HODOR

Kristian Nairn



4 The gentle giant who acts as Bran's legs and guardian quickly became a fan favourite, inspiring many a meme due to his kind soul, his willingness to fully disrobe and the fact that the only word he can utter has proven to be surprisingly versatile.

BRIENNE OF TARTH

Gwendoline Christie



5 After defeating Loras Tyrell in combat, Brienne quickly became one of *Game Of Thrones*' strongest characters. This is a show short on people who keep to their sense of right and wrong, but she's also capable of recognising the humanity in Jaime (after a while, anyway).



SEASON THREE BIGGEST SHOCKS

RED WEDDING

EPISODE NINE, 'THE RAINS OF CASTAMERE'

21

Fans of the books could talk about how they knew it was coming, but there's no denying the sheer impact of the Red Wedding sequence. These were the characters who could be held up as forces for good in this dark, dark world, and to see them so cruelly and brutally cut down was frankly traumatising. After seeing poor Talisa and their unborn son murdered, Robb Stark is shot with a crossbow, while a desperate Catelyn takes Walder Frey's wife hostage. "I'll get another," Frey shrugs, and as Robb is killed by the treacherous Roose Bolton, Cat howls as she slits the girl's throat, before being killed in turn. Michelle Fairley's performance is utterly devastating. We're not sure we've gotten over it yet.



HIS WATCH IS ENDED

EPISODE FOUR, 'AND NOW HIS WATCH IS ENDED'

22

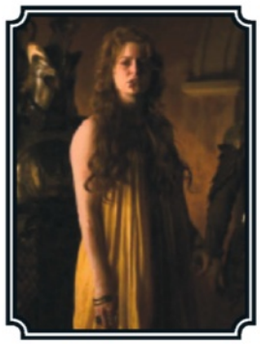
The Night's Watch is made up of men of varying skill who had either volunteered or been press-ganged into taking the black and heading north. With some exceptions, honour had been forced on these men, but they had been kept in line by the formidable Jeor Mormont. When the Watch demanded to take the supplies of the grotesque, lecherous Craster, we assumed that the Old Bear would keep them in line, and it was devastating to see him so cruelly betrayed.

LITTLEFINGER'S REVENGE

EPISODE FIVE, 'THE CLIMB'

23

Poor Ros had lasted nearly three seasons. However, her mouth gets her into trouble when Littlefinger discovers that she's been feeding information to his rival Varys. The reveal of her mutilated corpse is one of the most unpleasant scenes in a gruesome season, prompting further debate about the show's treatment of its female characters. In terms of what it means for the story, it's another sharp reminder that marriage will not temper Joffrey's psychosis and that Littlefinger has no interests but his own.



DADDY CAN'T HELP YOU NOW

EPISODE THREE, 'THE WALK OF PUNISHMENT'

24

The Kingslayer had always kept his smug sense of humour. No matter how dire the situation, he could always fall back on his reputation as a swordsman. Until, that is, he got on the wrong side of brutal hunter Locke, who took exception to Jaime using his father Tywin as a threat. "You're nothing without your daddy," Locke spits. "Your daddy ain't here. Never forget that. Here, this should help you remember!" With that, Jaime's sword hand is gone, and his life will never be the same again.



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25 CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT

EPISODE SEVEN, 'THE BEAR AND THE MAIDEN FAIR'

Jaime lost his famous sword hand, and Theon suffered a similar fate in the Dreadfort. He's put through some brutal torture, but things only gets worse for him. After a staged escape attempt that nearly sees him – literally – buggered, Theon suffers a flayed pinkie finger and twisted mind games, after which the sadistic Ramsay Snow decides to remove the part of Theon's body everyone has heard of. The next time we see the psychopath, he's taking a bite of a large sausage. Not subtle, but definitely effective.



26 DAENERYS BLOWS HER TOP

EPISODE FOUR, 'AND NOW HIS WATCH IS ENDED'

After spending Season Two watching Daenerys ponder allegiances in Qarth, seeing her attempting to purchase slaves in Astapor didn't seem like a massive step forward. However, we were surprised to see her agree to trade Drogon, the largest of her dragons, in exchange for the Unsullied slave army. As it turns out, her dragons don't take orders because they're not slaves. They listen to their mother sure enough, though, and set slavemaster Kraznys alight. This season we saw a new side to Daenerys: warrior queen.





27 THE ROYAL WEDDING VOW

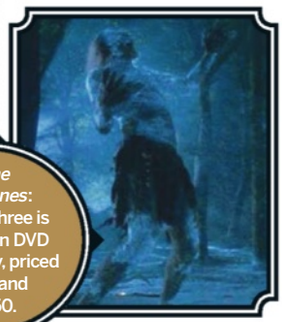
EPISODE EIGHT, 'SECOND SONS'

The season saw Tyrion becoming increasingly compassionate and responsible, and there's no greater example of this than his wedding to Sansa. Tyrion navigates what could be the most awkward ceremony in history, and manages to keep his new bride away from the cackling Joffrey. As the wedding wears on, the increasingly wine-soaked Tyrion refuses to 'bed' Sansa in front of the assembled guests, and even threatens to castrate Joffrey. Thanks to Tywin's intervention he gets away with it… for now.

28 SAM THE SLAYER

EPISODE EIGHT, 'SECOND SONS'

As Sam fled for the Wall with his beloved Gilly and her baby in tow, it seemed like a prime occasion for the makeshift family to be killed off. All signs point to death as their makeshift refuge is covered in crows, heralding the arrival of a White Walker. Sam is full of surprises, however, and produces the dragonglass blade he found at the Fist of the First Men. Suddenly, the Night's Watch's whipping boy becomes a White Walker slayer. It's inspiring stuff.



Game Of Thrones: Season Three is out now on DVD and Blu-ray, priced at £25 and £34.50.

29 INTO THE BEAR PIT

EPISODE SEVEN, 'THE BEAR AND THE MAIDEN FAIR'

We questioned exactly how much the Kingslayer cared about his captor, especially when he was given the opportunity to go home without her, Jaime left Brienne to be put into a dress and thrown into a bear pit. Despite being one of the best fighters on the show, even Brienne has her limits, and a real live bear looked like it was one of them. However, Jaime reveals that their time together wasn't entirely meaningless, and returns, jumping into the pit to rescue the person who might be the first real friend he's ever had.



30 DEATH IS NOT THE END

EPISODE FIVE, 'KISSED BY FIRE'

The Brotherhood Without Banners are an interesting group of uncertain loyalty and morality, especially with Paul Kaye's Thoros of Myr making for an unlikely holy man. His priesthood credentials are proven when he performs a miracle on his leader Beric Dondarrion, bringing him back to life after his deadly duel with the Hound. We learn that he has died and been brought back to life six times, although actor Richard Dormer gives Beric a hint of tragedy as he tells Arya that nothing comes without a price.



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THE EYE OF TH SPIDE



BEHIND THE SCENES AND UNDER THE MASK ON THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2

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Like down-on-his luck Peter Parker saving New York in the face of hero-baiting headlines, 2012's The Amazing Spider-Man was a surprise hit, silencing the sceptics and carving out its own identity from Sam Raimi's legacy. Now, it's not only Spidey that's bolder, brighter and more confident in The Amazing Spider-Man 2, but its cast and creators too...

WORDS **WILL LAWRENCE**

IT SHOULD COME AS NO GREAT SURPRISE THAT THE FORTHCOMING SEQUEL TO THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN STARTS WITH A THRILLING AIRBORNE SET PIECE. WHAT MIGHT SEEM RATHER STARTLING, THOUGH, IS THAT THE OPENING SEQUENCE DOES NOT FEATURE THE TITULAR WEBSLINGER; IT FEATURES HIS PARENTS INSTEAD.

In a flashback, our hero's enigmatic pop Richard Parker flees Oscorp, for who he works as a researcher, with a secret that threatens to destroy all he holds dear, including his family. A brawling sequence ensues aboard a small private jet, parts of which have featured in the first trailer. This bustling scene was the very first thing that filmmaker Marc Webb shot on the new movie. "We built the fuselage on a stage in Long Island, on top of a motion base gimbal," begins Webb, who returns to the director's chair following the $750 million success of *The Amazing Spider-Man* in 2012.

"I wanted to shoot that scene first because I thought the studio might want to cut it," he adds. "There is no Spider-Man in that opening sequence! It is really intense though, and it helps you get into what Spider-Man is, that world and the elements that preceded him." During the course of the scene, Richard Parker (played by Campbell Scott) demonstrates his action chops. "I love the idea of heroism in the Parker family," adds the director, who made his name as a feature filmmaker with *(500) Days Of Summer*.

Webb is sitting in his edit bay on the Sony lot in Los Angeles, revealing extracts from his latest film. The very first image in the movie is of a ticking watch (a Tag if you want to be precise, which we see on Richard Parker's wrist), and a few minutes later we're watching golden girl Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone) deliver her valedictorian speech. "Time is luck," she says. It's these brief moments that set up the whole movie's ⇨



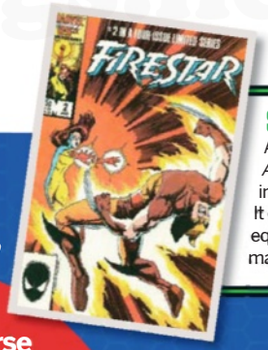
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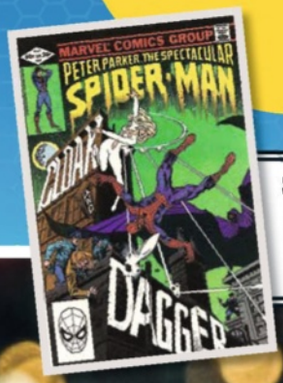
MARVEL'S CIVIL WAR

With Sony Pictures, 20th Century Fox and Marvel Studios owning different slices of House of Ideas, what could be the next flashpoints?









SONY VERSUS FOX

A native to 1981 cartoon S*pider-Man And His Amazing Friends*, Firestar was incorporated into Marvel comic canon in *Uncanny X-Men*. It could be argued that both universes have an equally strong claim to the character, as she made her 'first' appearance in both worlds.

MARVEL VERSUS FOX

A number of key X-Men characters – Rogue, Mystique, Sabretooth and even Wolverine – first appeared in other books. The super-strong Nineties Rogue stole her powers from Ms Marvel, so it's not impossible that this version of the character could appear in a future Marvel movie, while angry young Wolverine (with claws in his gloves) could pop up in Marvel Phase Three, though that would be utterly awful.

Beast, meanwhile, underwent his furry blue transformation outside of the *X-Men* comic and spent a good chunk of the Seventies as an Avenger, so it could be argued that Marvel Studios have a stronger case for the bouncing blue incarnation.

Though Marvel has considered Black Panther and Inhumans movies at various stages and regained the unused Namor rights from Universal, all these characters have integral roles in the Fantastic Four universe, and underwent significant development within that book. Perhaps we could see another double Quicksilver scenario there.

SONY VERSUS FOX VERSUS MARVEL

First appearing in *Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man*, Cloak & Dagger have also been sporadically described as mutants. Marvel did tout a TV series – suggesting that they feel the rights lie with them – so this could go one of three ways.

MARVEL VERSUS SONY

Though the rotund Kingpin of Crime is Daredevil's most enduring nemesis, he actually debuted as a Spider-Man bad guy and remained a constant in his rogues' gallery. Sony had a deal with Fox while the rights were with them for his use in the unfairly derided *Daredevil* film, but will they extend the same courtesy to Marvel Studios for their Netflix series?

While the Punisher and Morbius, the Living Vampire both made their debut in the *Amazing Spider-Man* comic, the situation here isn't so simple. The Punisher rights were sold to Lionsgate, while Morbius made a cameo in 1998's *Blade*, courtesy of New Line. Both sets of rights are now back with Marvel, so Sony's rumoured Morbius movie could be a flashpoint.







This incarnation is still very much a teenaged Peter Parker.





The sequel sees the first appearance of Harry Osborn, played by Dane DeHaan.



WHAT HAPPENS TO A SPIDER WHEN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING?

Electro's Jamie Foxx on befriending Tony Stark and sizing up Spidey

ON THE AMAZING SPIDER-GIRL

"My little girl was throwing a Spider-Man-themed party. I'm looking outside at the party, and then we get the call that I'm going to be playing Electro.

I told her, 'Daddy's going to be in *Spider-Man*.' She said, 'What you going to be doing in Spider-Man? There's already a Spider-Man.' And I said, 'No, I'm playing Electro. I'm playing the bad guy.' She said, 'Oh, Spider-Man's going to kick your butt!'

For her last birthday she wanted an Iron Man party. She said to me, 'I told everyone Tony Stark is coming.' I said, 'Robert Downey Jr is not coming to your party,' but I texted Robert, and he showed up and brought a ton of Iron Man stuff."

ON THE BRO BEHIND THE BLUE

"When we created our version of Electro we put a lot of thought into the Max Dillon character. He starts to think Spider-Man is his best friend and builds this relationship with him in his head, and that is something you really enjoy as an actor."

ON ACTION SCENES

"The Times Square sequence is special because we did a lot of real-life special effects to go with the CGI, and that really gives it some 'oompf'. It's tough for Spider-Man, because how does he fight all the electricity that is in Times Square when his webs conduct electricity?"

ON SUPERVILLAINS

"It makes Spider-Man even better, having such a tough villain to defeat. In the other Spider-Man movies you often find out who the villain is slowly. But here it is set up like a heavyweight fight. It makes Spider-Man an even better superhero."

thematic drive. Time is of the essence. "There are clocks and watches throughout the movie," says Webb, "and the theme is you have to enjoy the time you've got with the ones you love. That is something that informs the entire film.

"It's a big action spectacle, and there's a lot fun," he continues, "but you have to have an idea at the beginning, particularly with these types of movies. With so many superhero movies and franchises, you always need an idea, and that was our theme that drives the movie forward." Time is inherently cinematic; when filmmakers want something to feel more dramatic they tend to add a ticking clock. "It is something that comes from your subconscious," says Webb, "and it is a really fun thing to play with in the movie."

In the first movie, Webb and his producers, Avi Arad and Matt Tolmach, only cranked up the dramatic tension – and subsequent action – once it had entered its second half, patiently building the characters that would front the new franchise since Sam Raimi's contribution ran its course. In the second movie, however, action drives the first half hour.

Following the Richard Parker airplane sequence, Webb swings straight into action with Spider-Man in New York City. Peter Parker is supposed to be attending his graduation ceremony, where Gwen is giving her address, but is caught up in Spider-duties, chasing an armoured car packed with a highly dangerous and explosive substance that has been hijacked by the crazed Aleksei Sytsevich (Paul Giamatti), who will later evolve into the villain Rhino.

> **"THE EYES CAN MAKE OR BREAK THE WHOLE MOVIE"**
> **ANDREW GARFIELD**

IT'S ANOTHER FAST-PACED SEQUENCE, MUCH OF WHICH WAS FILMED ON THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN, BUT UNLIKE THE AIRBORNE SCENE THAT STARTS THE MOVIE, IT RINGS WITH humour. Spider-Man is centre stage, and cracking wise constantly. Peter, it seems, is finally enjoying life as a superhero, which was the way creator Stan Lee imagined the relationship between the boy and his alter-ego in his original stories. "We wanted to create a more fun, playful tone, especially after the opening bit, which would engage with kids and families," says Webb of the chase scene. "What is elemental to Spider-Man is wit and lightness. We wanted to come out the gate really strong, so there's a lot of action up front – that iconic Spider-Man stuff that we all love. We really worked hard to develop that quippy DNA and all that really exciting fun stuff that we all loved from the comics. Then we take some time to dig into the characters." Peter and Gwen have issues to resolve – the latter wants leave New York to study at Oxford University, while Peter's old buddy Harry Osborn (Dane DeHaan), returns to town. As the story unfolds, Peter comes to the realisation that most of his problems have one thing in common: Oscorp. "[At] the middle and end of the movie," says Webb, "things become incredibly fast-paced."

The Amazing Spider-Man 2 is the largest production ever shot on the streets of New York according to the studio, and during filming a group of city kids were treated to what for many would have been a very special moment. Andrew Garfield is a keen basketball player, and on set one day he spotted a group of children shooting hoops on one of New York's many courts. He

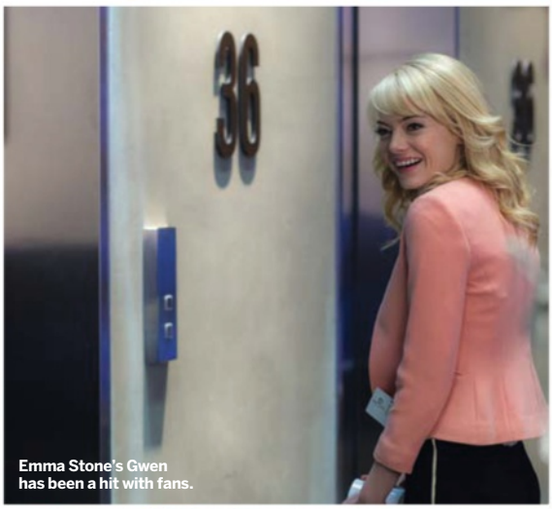
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The new movie brings new tensions for Gwen and Peter.







Emma Stone's Gwen has been a hit with fans.



"WE WANTED TO MAKE A MOVIE THAT FELT LIKE THE SPIDER-MAN FROM THE COMIC"
MATT TOLMACH

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

Chronicle star Dane DeHaan on the all-new Green Goblin

ON THE COMICS

"I think it's always important to understand the history of these characters and what they were in the past and the archetype of where they fit into the Spider-Man canon, but ultimately I think what's important to recognise is that, especially with Harry, is that this a Harry that's different than we've ever seen before.

My character honours who Harry is and what Harry needs to stand for, but this particular storyline and the particular stuff that he's going through, it's a brand new Harry. It's a Harry of today."

ON SUPERHEROES

"Acting is something I've wanted to do my whole life. That started when I was young, and I just played superheroes all the time and would dress up as Spider-Man.

I used to dress up as Superman as well, and I would wear my underwear on the outside of my pyjamas, because that's what Superman does!"

ON THE CASTING

"To be in this movie was a dream come true. Also, I get to work with really great actors and a really amazing director on a really amazing script. So my childhood dreams came true, yet I'm fulfilled as an adult and as an actor.

It's all very overwhelming right now, but it's all good!"

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decided to join in while clad in his crime-fighting clobber. "I was like, 'These kids are going to lose their minds as soon as Spider-Man shows up,'" begins Garfield when we meet on the Sony lot. "But then I arrived and they were these really serious, street-smart, five-year-old inner-city kids. I was like, 'Yo, can I play?' And they were like, 'Yeah, if you want.' They weren't that impressed," he laughs. "They were kind of fed up with up with me ball-hugging, and I wasn't as good as them. But I had a good time."

UNLIKE HIS SHOULDER-SHRUGGING BASKETBALL COMPANIONS, THE MAN PLAYING THE NEW INCARNATION OF PETER PARKER/SPIDER-MAN IS A LIFELONG FAN of the superhero character, and is fully aware of the prevailing moods among the Webslinger's enormous fanbase. Even though the recent reboot chalked up huge figures at the box office, some fans hoped to see more of the humour that prevails in the comic-books. Garfield and his fellow filmmakers have taken note in their sequel, with the actor calling in movement specialist Cal McCrystal, who he describes as a "brilliant physical comedian, director and kind of physical clown," to help him explore Spider-Man's movement.

"We talked about Bugs Bunny and the trickster archetype, making sure that we see what sets Spider-Man apart," says Garfield, "because Stan Lee has always been so beautiful at writing into Spider-Man the quips, wittiness, physical absurdity and enjoyment that Peter Parker feels when he's in the Spider-Man suit." The suit, of course, is another contentious item of debate among fans, with arguments bristling over the shape of the webslinger's eyes. For his latest outing, the filmmakers have worked hard to bring them in line with the enlarged peepers drawn by artist Mark Bagley in the pages of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, which launched in 2000 and ran until 2009.

"It's such big question, this eyes thing," Garfield says, "because in the process of making such a small choice, it's so vast. There's a universe in that choice. And the responsibility that you feel to what shape the eyes should be, that can make or break a Spider-Man fan's experience of the whole movie. "If the eyes aren't right, but everything else is right, that person's going to come away, go online and be like, 'The eyes sucked. I couldn't see anything else. The eyes sucked for me. It wasn't what I thought Spider-Man should be!'"

As it is, creating Spider-Man's oversized eyes has not been an easy process. "Far from it," says Webb. "Creating those eyes was a long, long, long process. I remember about a week before we started shooting we finally got them down – they looked so great. Then Andrew put them on and he couldn't see a thing! He was walking into walls, which is very inappropriate behaviour for Spider-Man. Frankly, the first time around, I don't think we nailed the costume at all," the director adds. "But this time we want to be iconic, the Spider-Man we know and love with those big eyes. It's a very difficult thing to achieve, but it's one of the things I'm most proud of."

Some people will go to extraordinary lengths to feast their eyes on Spider-Man. In winter last year, while the crew were shooting in Long Island, New York, a UFO smashed into one of their lighting balloons, before crashing to earth in the middle of





STUCK ON YOU

Sam Raimi's girl next door and Marc Webb's geek queen go head-to-head for our hearts

MARY JANE WATSON (KIRSTEN DUNST)



V

GWEN STACY (EMMA STONE)



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Peter Parker had a crush on girl next door Mary Jane for years, but she only had eyes for his best friend Harry Osborn until Spider-Man came on the scene. She fell for the spandex and thwip thrills, only developing feelings for the man behind the mask towards the end of the 2002 movie.

WINNER GWEN

Gwen and Peter bonded like atoms in a Br2 molecule. They are intellectual equals and equally as awkward around each other, made worse by Uncle Ben's stirring ("That's the girl on your computer!"). These two are much more suited, and Peter even confesses his super secret on their first date!





THE FIRST KISS

The upside-down smooch created a stir, earning actors Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst an MTV Award for Best Kiss. But while there's no doubting the passion and dedication that went into this scene (bra-less in the freezing rain couldn't have been pleasant), it was lacking in romance.

WINNER MARY JANE

Their first clinch had us in a spin as Peter shot some webbing at Gwen's bottom, simultaneously revealing his secret identity and his not-so-secret feelings. It may not be as memorable as the Mary Jane lip lock, but the moment was incredibly sweet and loaded with chemistry.

A MEETING OF MINDS



He liked taking pictures, and she was happy to pose for him. His job was to save people, and she needed saving. But that's where the compatibility ended between the aspiring actress and the photojournalist. When he ended their relationship to protect Mary Jane, she didn't stay and fight; she accepted John Jameson's proposal instead.

WINNER GWEN



Far from just Spidey's squeeze, Gwen also doubled as his sidekick when she put her life at risk developing an antidote to the Lizard's drug. With a brain just as big as Peter's (she's top of the class, if you ask her), Gwen automatically wins our respect for being driven and gutsy, even subduing Flash Thompson when he starts beating on Peter.

SO MANY FEELS

The pair endured a rocky relationship over the course of the trilogy, with other men getting in the way and Peter flirting briefly with Gwen. Come the finale, though, they resolve to work on their problems following the death of Harry. Moving but underwhelming.

WINNER GWEN

Peter may have promised Gwen's dying father that he would stay clear of the blonde bombshell for her sake, but it's obvious he can't keep his word. The pair are meant for each other, which makes it hard to accept the inevitable. We can taste the salty tears already.







"WE TALKED ABOUT BUGS BUNNY AND THE TRICKSTER ARCHETYPE, MAKING SURE THAT WE SEE WHAT SETS SPIDER-MAN APART"
ANDREW GARFIELD



Andrew Garfield's incarnation of Spidey has been decidedly more upbeat than Tobey Maguire's version.



Jamie Foxx takes on primary villain duties as Electro.

the set. It turned out to be a drone. "People were trying so hard to see what we were doing," explains producer Tolmach, who joined the franchise ahead of the 2012 reboot, "that someone had mounted a camera in this drone and sent it spying overhead. We took it as a good sign, that people were willing to go to those sort of lengths to get information on Spider-Man."

BEFORE IT CRASHED, THE DRONE MIGHT HAVE RELAYED SHOTS OF THE ENORMOUS SET BUILT ON LONG ISLAND TO MIMIC MANHATTAN'S TIMES SQUARE. IT IS HERE that the villain Electro (Jaime Foxx) first reveals himself to Spider-Man in all his electrically charged power. With millions of volts crackling through his fingertips, he is more than a match for the webslinger, and Times Square suffers a violent electrical storm. "We are proud of the first movie, but we like this script better," beams Tolmach. "On the first one we were locked into certain things that we had to do – the origin story and all that. We had to navigate around that from a story perspective. But on this one we all wanted to go and have fun – make a big Spider-Man movie that felt like the Spider-Man from the comics. We wanted to take it to new heights with incredible villains."

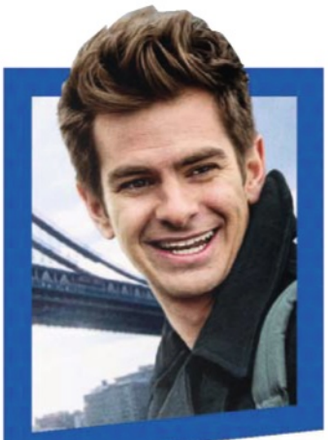
The idea of making a film with Electro as the main villain stretches way back to a script idea by director James Cameron, in which a character called Strand demonstrated the incredible power wielded by the Electro from the comic-books, who first appeared in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #9, published in February 1964. "Electro is a really important character in the Spider-Man universe," says Webb, "and he's brilliantly brought to life by Jamie Foxx." Webb and Foxx, an Oscar-winner courtesy of his portrayal of pianist Ray Charles in *Ray*, built a strong back story for Electro, including a scene that acts as a window into the life of the ordinary man that fathers the villain, Max Dillon.

"The back story of Max is the fact that he is 42 years old, living with his mom," Foxx explains. "He had a wife at one point, and it didn't work out because he just couldn't get things going. His father left him and things like that. That's a great jumping-off point to make you understand why Max turns into Electro." According to producer Arad, chairman and CEO of Marvel Studios, Marvel villains are, invariably, victims of circumstance. "They deal with their issues and pain by doing the wrong things, like becoming villains," he adds. "Although they have their everyday problems like everyone else, unlike Spider-Man they can't tell right from wrong. Electro is a prime example. Max has been ignored his whole life, now he wants recognition at any cost."

In the early chase scene, Spider-Man bumps into Max, a humble, unassuming employee at Oscorp. Ever the gentleman, Spidey clocks his name tag and uses his name, which is a big deal for Max. "We built upon that," says Foxx, "wondering what a person would be like who's just wandering through life, no one ever says his name and then, all of a sudden, the biggest person in the world recognises him, or at least says his name so he thinks, in his mind, and we took that back story and then added on to it."

Webb shows a scene in which Max is living at home with his mum. It is his birthday, but even his mother has forgotten. He is clearly a lost soul. "I've known guys like that," says Foxx, who played a real-life troubled genius in *The Soloist*, "that you see wandering through life and then, all of a sudden, they are just lost. So when he does turn into Electro and Spider-Man doesn't remember him, it gives good reason for him to want to kick Spider-Man's ass!"

The Amazing Spider-Man 2 will be released in cinemas on 18 April.



YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD SPIDER-MAN

Spider-Man's Andrew Garfield on growing into Peter Parker

ON PETER PARKER 2.0

"In this movie there's a greater sense of ownership for Peter over the things he has created. It's important, because it's a great counterpoint to what Peter is going through in his life. That creates a nice tension between Spider-Man and Peter Parker."

ON THE COSTUME

"Putting on that costume allows him the right to express different parts of himself, just like in life. When we're anonymous we get to express and act parts of ourselves that we don't in real life. There's the anonymity of the internet, for example."

ON GETTING IN SHAPE

"It is great to get paid to work out for this role, but it's not my ideal way of doing it. I like being active and physical, but lifting weights is not something I do for fun, though the effect it has is very rewarding.

It is empowering to have this kind of physical shape, because I was always the one getting concussed on the rugby pitch because of my less than huge stature! But I was always good at weaving, because I was lithe, skinny and quick.

My metabolism has slowed down since the first movie. I don't know what the stuntmen are putting in the water or whatever, but they eat terribly every day, and yet their metabolisms remain the same!"

ON PETER PARKER, BOYFRIEND

"Peter is a pretty evolved dude! What Gwen symbolises is a great example for young women, and Peter responds to that. He was raised by Aunt May and has a sensitive heart."

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On set for the second series of David S Goyer's Da Vinci's Demons

WORDS
JONATHAN HATFULL

DAVID S GOYER'S VISION OF THE LIFE OF LEONARDO DA VINCI IS SETTING SAIL FOR BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS. **SCIFINOW VISITS THE SET** TO FIND OUT HOW SEASON TWO WILL UP THE ANTE...

IT'S A COLD AND WET OCTOBER MORNING WHEN SCIFINOW IS USHERED INTO MARGAM CASTLE IN PORT TALBOT. SUDDENLY, WE'RE IN A FLORENTINE PALAZZO WATCHING A RAUCOUS FEAST ABOUT TO TURN VIOLENT, AND THE WINTRY WELSH WEST COAST SUDDENLY SEEMS VERY FAR AWAY.

Da Vinci's Demons has been playing with perceptions since day one. It turned one of the best-known geniuses in history into a rakish adventurer, and used the political bloodbath of Medici-era Florence as the setting for a fantastical adrenaline-fuelled adventure, with the rolling Welsh countryside doubling for Tuscany. It felt as if David S Goyer was trying to combine *Indiana Jones* with *The Tudors*, which is a concept that could either soar or fall flat on its face. With a second season commissioned five days after the premiere, it's clear what the outcome was.

Walking around the set of Season Two, it becomes very clear that the first year was just a warm-up. As we hustle from set to set, ducking out of the rain and into the Renaissance, the contrast between the outside world and the one created for the show becomes more and more impressive. The expansive, beautifully detailed locations take us from Florence to a Vatican throne room to the New World itself.

"It's so wildly ambitious," enthuses Tom Riley, the man charged with playing Leonardo da Vinci. "I think it's fair to say that we took four episodes or so to really find our feet and then go 'Yeah, this is what we are,' and take off. And then the second season is us saying, 'Yeah, that's the show we are, we're going to commit to it.'"

Riley looks somewhat incongruous in the small meeting room, where he chats about the show's challenges. While Season One da Vinci had a Renaissance spin on David Tennant-era *Doctor Who* hair, the man in front of us is sporting a less coiffed shoulder-length do. "This is what my hair looks like in everyday life, then I get a short wig to do the show!" he jokes.

"No, I've been on a journey this year. This is nine months to a year's growth without access to a barber's. Leonardo's been on a ship to the new world. We thought about having an on-ship hairdresser, but there were enough historical inaccuracies without adding that one!"

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"We did a scene that was like a human Donkey Kong with us vaulting over barrels in a rain machine"

Blake Ritson

WORLD

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SET VISIT

Da Vinci's Demons



Fans of the show will remember that the first season ended on a hell of a cliffhanger, as the glorious Medici wedding became a battlefield and Lorenzo de Medici (Elliot Cowan) and Leonardo faced down dastardly Vatican agent Riario (Blake Ritson). "It ended with me trying to blow off his head with a Renaissance bazooka!" laughs Ritson, looking more laid-back than his scheming, sadistic character as he reflects.

"It picks up immediately," Riley assures us. "It was such a cruel cliffhanger, we left so many threads dangling that it would have been a little unfair to not pick up and continue immediately. It's a big journey both geographically and emotionally."

SEASON TWO WILL SEE THE FATES OF DA VINCI AND RIARIO BECOME EVEN MORE ENTWINED AS THE PAIR SET OFF FOR THE NEW WORLD, WITH VERY DIFFERENT ENDS IN MIND. LEONARDO CONTINUES TO IGNORE THE DANGERS OF HIS RELENTLESS PURSUIT FOR KNOWLEDGE, WHILE THE deadly Riario will stop at nothing to fulfil the wishes of his father, the truly despicable Pope Sixtus (James Faulkner). On the other side of the ocean lies an ancient text that could spell salvation or destruction for the whole world: the Book of Leaves.

"The idea is the Book of Leaves is this arcane compendium of forgotten knowledge which may have all the answers to solving the political turmoil in Europe, if not the world," explains Ritson. "It's the big prize for this season, the holy grail. Our relationship, Leonardo and Riario, it changes hugely this season. Because we are on exactly the same quest, we are forced into a grudging alliance, so we have to rely on each other physically and mentally. You never know quite how much they're playing one another, and it's constantly shifting. It's a very complex relationship."

One of the defining elements of the show has been how the creators transformed da Vinci into an action hero. If you enjoyed watching the inventor use his ambidextrousness for swordplay as well as sketching, rest assured that there will be plenty of creative violence on display in Season Two.

"This season we see Riario in a very physical climate, so I had to do unbelievable amounts of training," Ritson remembers. "I trained in Krav Maga, which is a pretty brutal threat-neutralisation system which blends judo, ju-jistsu, kickboxing, wrestling and also how to fish-hook an eye out with your thumb, so all the essentials! I remember a scene on a ship that almost became like a human *Donkey Kong* with us vaulting over barrels in a rain machine; it's big epic stuff we're doing this year."

That big epic stuff sounds so imposing that it's hard to believe that this New World could be brought to life here, with Machu Picchu and the ship itself sitting on a rain-lashed building site, but the extraordinary work of the production team speaks for itself, even when the weather doesn't play along.

"It's been wet," laughs Riley. "But not as wet as last year. Last year we got stung by the weather pretty horribly, this year we've had a beautiful summer so we were actually able to sell Italy and South America, which was the big challenge. The South America stuff is pretty amazing, I have to say. It looks lush, beautiful, green and gorgeous."

"It is fascinating how much you can do," explains *Doctor Who* veteran and BBC Worldwide executive Jane Tranter. "We



James Faulkner as the nefarious Pope Sixtus.

"It was such a cruel cliffhanger at the end of Season One, that it would have been a little unfair to not pick up and continue immediately"
Tom Riley





Master Of Invention

THE PARACHUTE

Da Vinci imagined the parachute as a seven-metre, pyramid-shaped linen cloth apparatus with a rigid frame. He believed that the user could jump from any height with it and be unharmed, but it's believed that it wasn't tested on anything taller than a tree.



DIVING SUIT

The diver would be fed air from a float through a series of leather-bound cane tubes that would be protected from pressure by steel rings. A wineskin could store air, while a handy bottle was included so the diver could relieve himself.



THE GLIDER

Although Leonardo was obsessed with building a machine with wings that flapped like a bird (the ornithopter), he also designed a glider that would allow flight, with stirrups for the pilot's feet and strings for steering.



THE ROBOT

Although it moved thanks to a system of pulleys and cables, Leonardo's invention is the first robot, with the knight able to move its arms, raise its visor, stand and sit. It was built in 2002, and designer Mark Rosheim used it as an inspiration for his NASA robots.



THE TANK

This war machine packed 36 guns onto its eight-man structure, with the outer shell allowing the drivers to essentially walk the tank into the thick of battle. Leonardo may have deliberately incorporated flaws into the design to prevent it from being used.



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Season Two sees da Vinci travel to the New World.

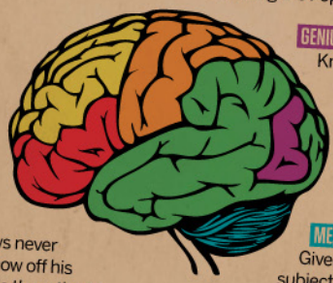
Brain Power

What's going on inside the mind of Leonardo da Vinci?

FLYING AWAY
A large proportion of da Vinci's brain is dedicated to the theory of flight, to the extent that he spends a great deal of money and time harassing pigeons to gain their secrets.

GOD, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING
Leonardo is in the middle of a great religious conflict, and frankly he's a little preoccupied with bigger issues than whether or not he's irritating the Pope.

BODICE AND TUNIC RIPPING
Even geniuses need some time to appreciate the beauty of the world, and da Vinci is a man who is open to the beauty of both men and women alike.



GENIUS AT WORK
Knowing that you're the cleverest person in the room is just as important as reminding everyone that you're the cleverest person in the room.

SWORDPLAY
An ambidextrous man knows never to miss an opportunity to show off his gifts, and what better stage is there than a swordfight? If anyone's stupid enough to take you on it's their fault.

ME, MYSELF AND I
Given that he may be the subject of an ancient prophecy, da Vinci might be forgiven for putting himself above everyone else, which he does.



made a commitment, we chose Wales because of the number of different landscapes. I wanted to take a big, big US series, but use British talent both in front and behind the camera and find some skills that are previously used for high-end pieces of television to use them to appeal to an American audience, and therefore much more international. American drama often appeals more internationally than British drama does because it hasn't quite got the scope or size or ambition in terms of number of episodes or production values. So it is something that I'm particularly proud of, that we managed to achieve so much of a global feel to *Da Vinci's Demons* here in Wales."

THE COMBINATION OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN STYLES IS CLEARLY THE AIM OF DA VINCI'S DEMONS. GULPING TEA AS A GANG OF EXTRAS IN PERIOD CLOTHING WALK THROUGH THE CASTLE, IT'S EASY TO FORGET THE STATESIDE INFLUENCE UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY SEE THE EPISODES.

Tranter explains that the blending of identities was key. "We tried to combine the meticulous attention to detail in terms of character, nuance and storytelling that you have in British drama with some of that swagger and epic breadth and high production values and sheer force of nature that you can get in American series. We tried to put all those together in *Da Vinci's Demons*."

Goyer himself might be absent from the set, wrapped up in whatever Zack Snyder's *Batman Vs Superman* will turn out to be, but Riley tells us that his guiding hand is never too far away. "The great thing about him, even now, is that even with all the other stuff he's got going on his life, you get stuck on a line in a scene and bung him an email, and he gets back to you in 30 seconds. He must never sleep! I've never known something so meticulously plan seasons in advance." Tranter agrees with this assessment. "He's the top of the pile. It's his show."

The writer's years of experience of adapting superhero comics played a significant part in Season One, and that graphic novel sensibility will continue to be a core component of *Da Vinci's Demons*. "This season I feel like I'm playing da Vinci Indiana Jones," grins Riley. "There are other characters who are a bit more graphic novel-y than I am; Riario certainly has his Darth Vader look, and this season Alfonso, who you'll meet, is very stylised, he's a cool costume. I feel like I get away with it; a lot of the time on this series because it's so warm in Peru. I've got no jacket on, so it's just a shirt and trousers, so I don't feel too silly. I feel more Clark Kent than Superman."

Still, however much Riley may downplay it, there's no escaping the fact that the show sees da Vinci as a superhero for Renaissance times. "That's exactly absolutely explicitly the case, and he's a superhero with all those accompanying superhero qualities," Tranter explains. "They're all flawed, they're all a little bit messed up in some way, and what I love about Leonardo da Vinci is that he's in that current realm of superheroes where he's an absolute geek. And all of that to me is such a joy, that suddenly in the 21st Century all of those nerdy boys have suddenly come out and that brain power can do that. The fact that Tom Riley is ripped to within an inch of his life and looks like a male model is glorious, but at the end of the day he's figuring it all out through da Vinci-vision. I just love that, I think it brings hope to everyone who's not ripped to within an inch of their lives."



Elliot Cowan takes on the role of another historical figure: Lorenzo de Medici.

Da Vinci's Demons Season Two will air from Fox on 28 March.

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NORMAN REEDUS

THE SMART WALKING DEAD VIEWER KNOWS NOT TO GROW TOO ATTACHED TO THE CAST, AWARE THAT ANY EPISODE COULD FEATURE their grisly demise. But when it comes to Daryl Dixon (Norman Reedus), we can't help feeling like we'd trade Rick (Andrew Lincoln)'s right hand for an official pardon. He's gone from being a redneck recluse to an essential member of the Atlanta survivors, just as capable of skewering walkers as he is bottle-feeding baby Judith (aka lil' ass-kicker). Rick has come to depend on him as the loyal and trustworthy second that Shane (Jon Bernthal) never was, and viewers can always rely on him for a wicked one-liner. It's no wonder he's the most bad-ass bachelor of the apocalypse, and actor Norman Reedus lives up to the hype.

DARYL'S GOT **99 PROBLEMS** BUT A WALKER AIN'T ONE. THE BREAKOUT STAR OF **THE WALKING DEAD** TAKES TIME OUT OF THE APOCALYPSE TO TALK BUCKET LISTS AND BOYFRIEND POTENTIAL...

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY**

One of the reasons we love Daryl is that he's so cool-headed in spite of the awful things that have happened to him. Do you think he has a breaking point?
I'm sure he does, but I try to play him as someone who's always fighting because he's constantly had his back up against the wall. He has always felt threatened, but I think he was just coming out of his shell with these new people [in the prison] and finding a sense of self-worth through this group, and now I think he's gonna retract back to his old self again.

No one's safe on the show, and you've acted out some shocking death scenes in the past, like being blown up in *Blade II* and eaten by space mutants in *Pandorum*. What would your death wish for Daryl be?
If I had my way, he would find a dog and then just walk down a road and disappear into the horizon like *Mad Max* – to be continued, you don't know what happens. I'm not into the idea of being ripped apart by zombies, I've seen that happen quite a bit.



If you could have a bucket list for him, what kind of things would be on there?
Oh man! Maybe take over a village of rabid children; have a pack of wild wolves follow him around; maybe fly a helicopter; grow a beard down to his knees; fish with a crossbow, that would be fun! You can actually do that – there are crossbows with reels attached to them, and you can shoot into the water and reel in the fish, so we could make that work. There's a ton of things! He should sleep with the entire cast – a giant end-of-the-world orgy!

Speaking of, er, romance, what kind of boyfriend do you think Daryl would be?
I think he would be a loyal boyfriend. He'd be a good protector; he'd probably be real honest and try his hardest. I'm trying not to play him like someone who's had a lot of experience and the type of guy that screws girls over. I think he would be very sincere and a good, loyal boyfriend.

It was a real shock to see Carol banished from the prison camp (after murdering two sick people). How do you think Daryl would have reacted if he was the one to find out, and not Rick?
There's so many things that these characters have to do in this new world that they would never have done ordinarily, like shooting people in the head and screwing over their friends. Maybe he'd try to cover up for her, or just put his foot down and say it had to be done, that she did the right thing. I think he'd be inclined to take her side right off the bat, to be honest.

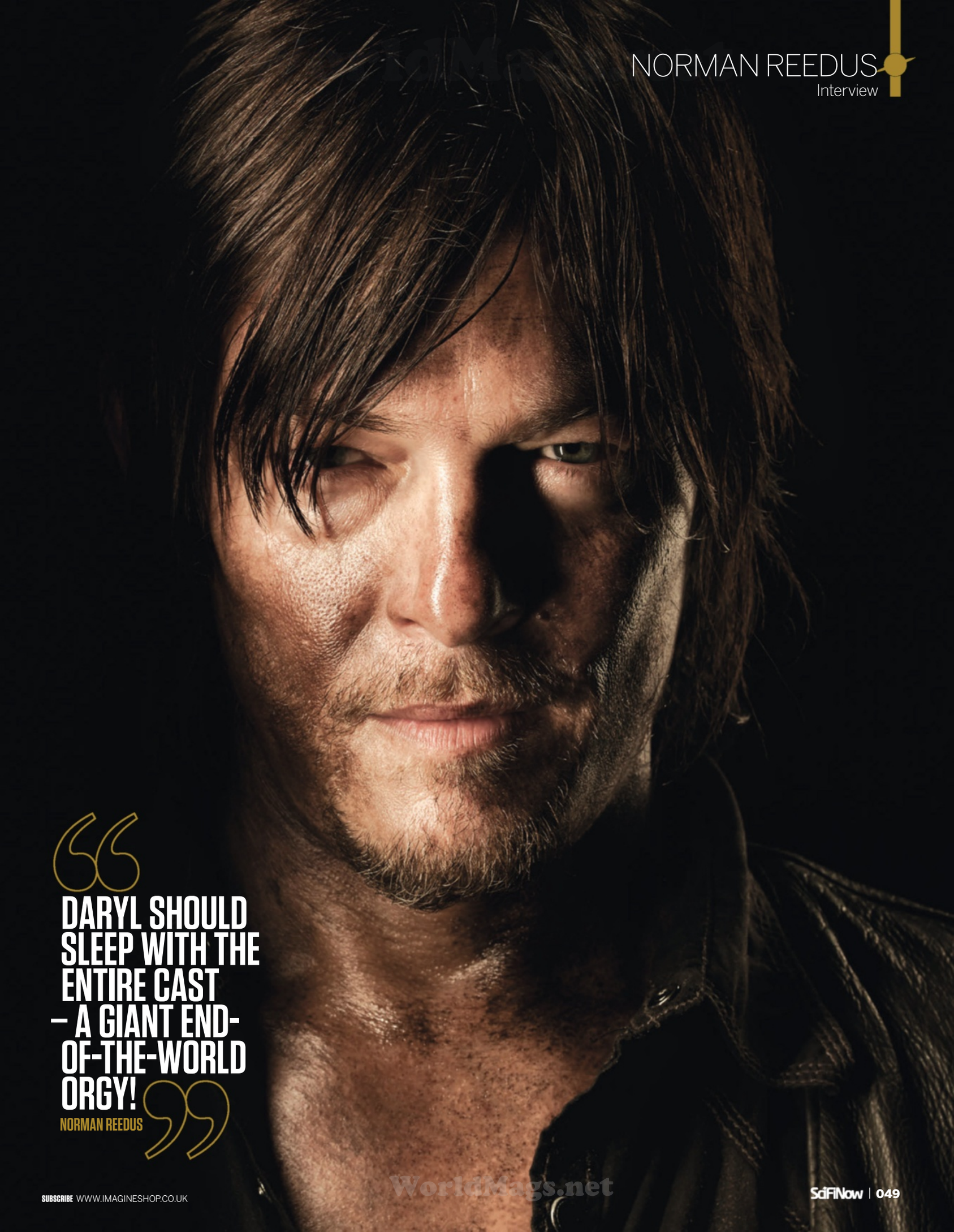
You play one of the best-loved characters on the show. Do you instantly know which scenes are going to get a great response?
I see things in scripts that I think people are going to really like, but when we first started the show I wondered how I was going to pull it off. I had all these one-liners, like telling Dale to "take that stupid hat and go back to *On Golden Pond*," calling Lori "Olive Oil", and saying "People in Hell want Slurpees" and "Choke hold's illegal". I remember seeing the movie *Wild At Heart*, where Nicolas Cage is wearing that crazy snakeskin jacket, and he's just owning it!

So I was thinking of that while saying those lines, and also when I wore the poncho. I actually asked for that poncho in Season Two; it was supposed to be a horse blanket that had a hole cut in. I remember when I was back in high school and I had the leather jacket that was like my pillow, my blanket and my best friend all-in-one, and I was trying to incorporate that into a poncho, thinking "You just gotta own it."

You once told us a fan had sent you a breast implant. Have you been presented with anything stranger since then?
One thing I've been getting a lot of – and I don't know if it's just popular in Asia – but there are dolls of Norman; not Daryl, but *me*. They're wearing my backpack that I travel with, and my clothes and sunglasses, but they're made out of lint and about two-feet tall. There's a really realistic, creepy vibe to them, but I kinda like it. They make me think, "Man, I need a haircut," or "I have such creepy little eyes."

The Walking Dead Season Four is currently airing on Mondays at 9pm on FOX.

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> DARYL SHOULD SLEEP WITH THE ENTIRE CAST – A GIANT END-OF-THE-WORLD ORGY!
> NORMAN REEDUS

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WHY **THE MACHINE** COULD BE THE CULT SCI-FI FILM OF 2014

UPGRADE IN PROGRESS...

The real rise of The Machine began at the film festivals, but now Caradog W James' lo-fi near-future thriller starring Arrow's Caity Lotz, Star Wars' Denis Lawson and Bond villain Toby Stephens is coming to the UK. We went on set with the cast and creators to discover how this pretender to Blade Runner's crown made good on the hype...

WORDS **DANIEL CAIRNS**

NOTHING SAYS 'DYSTOPIAN HUMANITY ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION SCI-FI' QUITE LIKE... BRIDGEND? A RURAL TOWN IN SOUTH WALES THAT'S AS FAR AWAY FROM ANY kind of doomed future as you can imagine, it's more like something from *The Vicar Of Dibley*, and the last place you'd expect Rick Deckard to be chasing Replicants, guns blazing. A quick taxi ride away, though, lies a disused factory, which is in the process of being turned into a high-tech research facility for *The Machine*, the second movie (and first genre flick) from Caradog W James.

The Machine is set in the near future in a Britain not so far removed from modern day; it's more *Children Of Men* than *Children Of Dune*. The country is still in the throes of the recession that has been a feature of these last few years, but it also has a Cold War with China to contend with. Toby Stephens (familiar to many as uber-evil posh Bond villain Gustav Graves from *Die Another Day*) plays Vincent McCarthy, a scientist working for clearly nefarious boss Thomson (Denis Lawson) on brain implants and prosthetics for mentally afflicted soldiers. He also hopes to use his research to aid his ill daughter.

He's later joined by American scientist Ava (*Arrow*'s Caity Lotz), who helps develop software that complements his own work. However she's naturally sceptical of Thomson, and alas, things don't end well for her. Clearly in mourning, McCarthy combines his and Ava's talents to create a machine in her image (somewhat redolent of Kenneth Branagh's *Frankenstein*, in which Branagh, in lovelorn desperation, tries to bring to unlife his recently murdered bride, played by Helena Bonham Carter). It's a rip-roaring success, and the Machine is born. To no one's surprise, Thomson wants to manipulate it for his own purposes, leading to all sorts of tense and highly combative situations.

A low-budget affair, it nevertheless has lofty ambitions. It possesses the look and themes of a high-concept, big-budget sci-fi movie, all moody lighting, shadows, silhouettes and corporate menace. It's grounded by the practical industrial setting provided by the set, giving it a sense of worn reality, something that has arguably been missing from much blockbuster sci-fi of late, what with its bloom-filled propensity for lens flair and computer graphics (though there's some of that in *The Machine*). John Giwa-Amu, the film's producer, explains what influenced him and James.

"*Blade Runner* would be the first thing that springs to mind when figuring out what influenced *The Machine*. It seems so obvious, but it's a timeless film. There's a bit of Kubrick too, I think. Caradog is very deliberate with his camera placements like Kubrick; he won't just stick a camera anywhere."

It's a tightly made, deliberately paced film then, with a harder edge than most, and a grounded, recognisable look. It's set only

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Arrow's Caity Lotz as the ill-fated Ava.

eight years in the future, so it's not as far-fetched-looking as some other sci-fi movies. Stephens elaborates on the aesthetic and how it compares to what has gone before.

"It's a claustrophobic film, but the ideas are huge. It's grounded, and not too futuristic, where everything's pristine. A lot of sci-fi has immaculate white suits, while this is very ad-hoc, with bits of old equipment working alongside newer tech."

WALKING AROUND THE SET, THE ATMOSPHERE IS THAT OF A WORLD ON THE PRECIPICE OF SOMETHING, STUCK BETWEEN A RAMSHACKLE PAST AND A tech-dominated future. The claustrophobic corridors and gloomy lighting present a sense of humanity in hiding, waiting for its next revolution, which is somewhat appropriate considering the themes of the film. Stephens elaborates as to some of these themes, as well as why the film was such a big draw to him.

"I think the main appeal of doing the film was that I'd grown up when *Blade Runner* came out, and I was overwhelmed by it and its ideas of the future with androids. They had feelings, memories and personalities too. How do we treat them? *Blade Runner* was much more about the hard-boiled detective story, though, and was very Raymond Chandler, while this deals more specifically with the morality. It's the main thread. My character compartmentalises a lot to justify what he's doing morally for the sake of his daughter. I like the echoes of *Frankenstein*, *Metropolis* too. It's very dark, driven and morally ambiguous."

> **"I LIKE THE ECHOES OF FRANKENSTEIN AND METROPOLIS TOO – IT'S VERY DARK, DRIVEN AND MORALLY AMBIGUOUS"**
> TOBY STEPHENS

Moral ambiguity is a big theme with movies featuring cyborgs, androids, or any



Pooneh Hajimohammadi as the cyborg Suri.

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SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE

5 more human than human characters that may have inspired The Machine

1. ROY BATTY
(Blade Runner)

For a merciless death machine, Batty is surprisingly vulnerable, and there's no better example of this than his exit scene.

2. T-800
(Terminator 2: Judgement Day)



Obviously, Arnie was a total git in the first film, but once he's reprogrammed and becomes pleasant in the sequel he's almost childlike, as he learns about and adapts to humans rather than punching their heads off.

3. CASELLA REESE
(Cyborg 2)



Obviously, *Cyborg 2* was a total stinker of a film, and surely one that Angelina Jolie won't be putting on her CV any time soon, but it too deals with a machine trying to find herself.

4. ALSATIA ZEVO
(Toys)

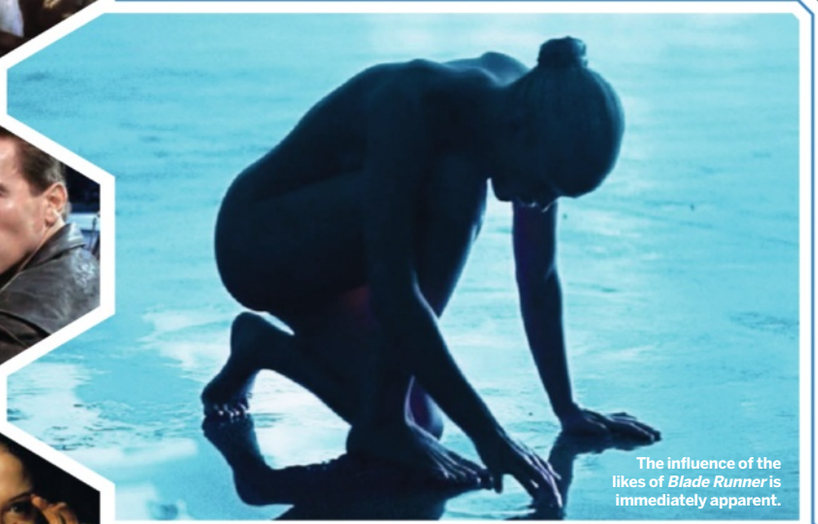


The big twist in *Toys* (look away now if you're bothered about having it spoiled) is that Joan Cusack's character (who played Robin Williams' sister) is a toy herself.

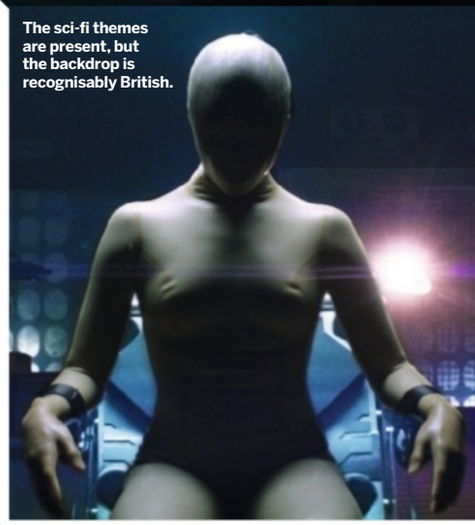
5. DATA
(Star Trek: The Next Generation)



Of course, it'd be remiss to forget about Data, everyone's favourite android striving to be something more. His big moment came in *Generations*, when he was suddenly free to become more human, turning into a colourful, joshing prankster rather than an oblivious automaton.



The influence of the likes of *Blade Runner* is immediately apparent.



The sci-fi themes are present, but the backdrop is recognisably British.

other kind of prosthetic people. After all, Frankenstein's monster wasn't evil; he was just childlike. At a stretch, the Terminator wasn't evil either; it was just paying the metaphorical bills.

"The Machine is very strong, but she's a little kid," explains Giwa-Amu. "She's dangerous. Caity Lotz is great and adds a lot of physicality to the role. She does parkour and stuff, so it's fun seeing her kick her way through big guys. This is a good character piece for her. From an acting point of view, it's fun for her because she goes from this innocent creation that doesn't really know how anything works at all, to someone who's incredibly complex."

"I've been dancing forever," explains Lotz, "and got into martial arts, and started doing parkour too. I did a bit of muay thai. Tae Kwon Do. It was all for fun and choreography. It's fun to do your own stunts, there's nothing too bad or dangerous. I've done some crazy stuff in the film, though!"

MOVING IS NO PROBLEM FOR LOTZ, THEN. IN FACT, IT'S THE INERT, MECHANICAL NATURE OF THE MACHINE THAT PROVIDED THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR HER.

"Eva and the Machine are completely different. She's quite harsh-looking and scary sometimes. I like that her voice is the opposite of how she looks, being very high and innocent. I try and pull my face muscles tighter and be aware of facial movements. The Machine doesn't instinctively emote or smile, it's surprisingly difficult to play. When you watch, she goes through all the stages of life, from being a baby to a young child, and a teen to an adult at an accelerated rate. She can be bratty sometimes.

"Someone will say to her, 'You can't do that!' and she says 'Why? Why? Why?' It's hard to emote with the eyes when you're deliberately restricting face movements. Usually, everything she does is reacting. In the beginning she doesn't have a lot of control over herself, like how to properly express what she's feeling. It was a fun challenge, though, I loved it. It's going to be hard to find something else as challenging."

Lotz's role as the Machine is the lynchpin of the movie, and she gets some memorable scenes, whether it's beating the heck out of soldiers or dancing naked, silhouetted in the darkness, her form illuminated in crimson by her internal machinery. However, there's still room for a memorable bad guy. Enter Denis Lawson.

"I do enjoy being the villain, yes," he agrees. "Villains are definitely more fun to play in the sense that they're easier. This villain is very funny, I hope. There's a dark twist in his character. It only occurred to me the other day that he's not unlike the character I played in *Jekyll* [written by Steven Moffat, long before he made Sherlock Holmes cool]. A bit corporate/Bond villain."

It's strange to find out, then, given his propensity for starring in sci-fi features (the aforementioned Jekyll, as well as playing Rebel pilot Wedge Antilles in the original *Star Wars* trilogy) that Lawson isn't the biggest fan of the genre.

"[I'm] not a huge sci-fi fan. Not enormously, which is funny considering the films I've done. Then again I don't like musicals, and I've been in a few of those!"

The Machine is in cinemas and VOD from 21 March, and is available on DVD and Blu-ray from 31 March.

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MOTHER SUPERIOR

WITH BATES MOTEL OPENING ITS DOORS FOR A SECOND SEASON, SCIFINOW TALKS TO VERA FARMIGA ABOUT WHY SHE LOVES PLAYING THE MOTHER OF ONE OF CINEMA'S MOST NOTORIOUS MONSTERS...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

CASTING VERA FARMIGA WAS A REAL COUP FOR BATES MOTEL. THE PITCH FOR THE SHOW – AN UPDATED PREQUEL TO ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S BELOVED CLASSIC – RUBBED some people up the wrong way, but the choice of such a respected actress to play Norman Bates' domineering mother Norma was reassuring. If nothing else, we all reasoned, the Oscar-nominated star of *Up In The Air* and *The Departed* would be fantastic.

Luckily, *Bates Motel* found its feet relatively quickly, not by aping the classic shocker, but by exploring the relationship between Norma and Norman. With some strong writing and excellent performances from Farmiga and Freddie Highmore, the show created a fascinating and surprisingly moving emotional core. Highmore's portrayal of the teenage Norman is outstanding, playing the character as a fragile, haunted and emotional teen who has grown up with an unstable, smothering mother. With such powerful central turns, our early concerns were soon forgotten, as were those of its star. "I was comfortable from the start," Farmiga tells us.

"I was comfortable from the moment I saw [Highmore's] audition tape. That's what secured my position as Norma Bates. I was on the fence about it at first; my own scepticism came into play. I thought 'Oh God, so many things could go horribly wrong with taking this on and tethering yourself to *Psycho*, and Hitchcock fans are going to be super-vigilant and hyper-critical, and there's so many things that can go wrong...' I was completely persuaded when I saw the level of nuance and depth that he brought. I had complete confidence that we could inhabit these iconic roles, but at the same time he was going to be strong enough as an actor to take ownership of it because he was so potent in the role."

When we speak to Farmiga, she has just finished work on *Bates Motel*'s second season. She is determined to reveal nothing, but her excitement is clear. "I'm fresh out of the gates of Season Two," she teases. "I just saw the last episode. It's just killer, it's so good!" After the first season, it's easy to see why Farmiga is so enthusiastic about *Bates Motel*. Even the most super-vigilant and hyper-critical Hitchcock fans saw the different approach that the show was taking, and the two incredibly rich and entertaining characters at its centre.

The leads of *Bates Motel* are not carbon copies of their originals. The teenage Norman has heartfelt good intentions to go with his lurking psychosis, making him a wonderfully tortured soul. As for Norma Bates, well, there has never really been a definitive version. In Hitchcock's *Psycho* we see Norman's twisted vision of her, but sequels aside, she has never been able to speak for herself. As played by Farmiga, she's a hypnotically watchable and unpredictable mother lioness.

"The tenacious heart of her maternity is this uncompromising and unconditional love of a dysfunctional child, and that has always been my bottom line: to present a woman with great, genuine empathy and unlimited capacity for giving her child that love," she explains. "And for me, I have two kids, that depiction of maternity is unnervingly relatable! That contradiction is really fun to play. She is one of the most honest compulsive liars, she's melodramatic and she's subtle, she's mysterious but she's flamboyant, she's hard but soft, she's a dragon at times and yet she's a damsel in distress. Those contradictions are so cool to waft between, you know?"

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INTERVIEW

Vera Farmiga

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Those contradictions are at the heart of *Bates Motel*. While other shows might flounder trying to find a tone, showrunners Carlton Cuse and Kerry Ehrin have embraced the fact that the series' various storylines involve a lot of both light and dark. "I think that we shift from melodrama and mystery and horror and family drama, psychological thriller into like oddball comedy, sometimes verging on screwball," enthuses Farmiga. "I think that's a treat too, yes, to explore the love, the lust, the psychosis, the dementia, the instability, the bedlam of parenting, but also the lunacy of it in a comedic way."

GIVEN THE DARKNESS OF THE SOURCE MATERIAL, THE MOMENTS OF HUMOUR IN BATES MOTEL DO COME AS A SURPRISE. AS NORMA ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE her business (despite all the murders) and conceal her and Norman's crimes from the authorities, particularly Sheriff Alex Romero (played with icy intensity by Nestor Carbonell), that there are moments of levity and gallows humour to be found came as a surprise not just to the viewers, but to Farmiga. "That was a treat to see, and maybe unexpected for me because we knew conceptually that it was going to be dark," Farmiga remembers.

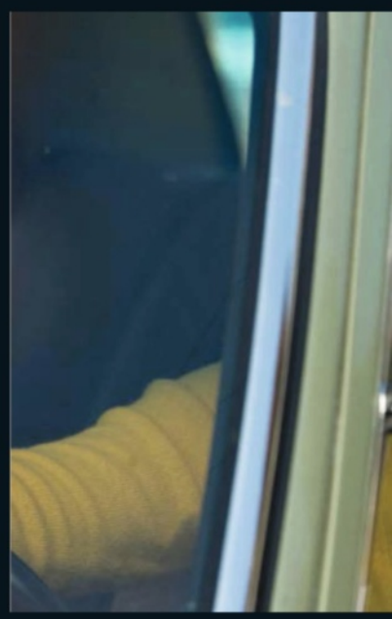
"We know the fates of these characters as we borrowed the characterisations and we borrowed the plot points, but I think ultimately it's this great American tragedy that we're exploring, but I think the journey along the way is so full of love and joy, because we want you to root for this dynamic, this mother and son duo, we want you to root for them, and hope for them that they don't meet their inevitable fate, and I think that in executing that you do have to portray so much love and joy and humour. I think that's the most surprising, the elements of humour and lunacy which really delight."

With the possible exception of *American Horror Story*'s Jessica Lange, it's hard to think of another actress on television who is having as much fun as Vera Farmiga. However, her performance would not be nearly as effective were it not for the fact that she plays the tortured soul of Norma so beautifully, as well as the more arch and comedic moments. During the course of the first season we gradually understood more and more how the character came to be the way she is, and Farmiga believes that these past traumas go some way to explaining why, as Norma puts it, "all the crazy people gravitate towards me!"

"There's a dual magnetism going on," she muses. "She comes with a very painful history of trauma in her life that she has not dealt with, that has developed into these really complicated psychological issues for her of depression, low self-esteem, fear and guilt. She's got her own corrosive childhood, and so parenting in light of that very difficult childhood that she has had, it affects her parenting capacities, and she's had pretty significant stressers in her life that affect the way she



Bates Motel **has won over many previously sceptical viewers.**





One invention for the show is her other son Dylan (Max Thieriot).

THE FAMILY THAT SLAYS TOGETHER...

The ideal line-up of the typical horror household



01. MOTHER

Norma Bates (Bates Motel)



Mother only wants the best for her family, and will do anything to protect it. If anyone threatens her loved ones, she will react with deadly force, although not always with the best logic. She may shout and scream at her children, but when it comes down to it she would lay down her life for them.

02. FATHER

Frank Parker (We Are What We Are)



The head of the family makes his presence felt through silence. He will be absent for long periods of time and take little action until it's necessary. He is deeply concerned with tradition, and won't accept his children trying to leave or stop eating people.

03. OLDER SON

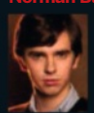
Ike Koffin (Mother's Day)



The older brother has had the importance of tradition and family instilled in him from birth. He may appear more reasonable than his other family members, but he's just as cut-throat as his relatives, and is often called on to keep his siblings in line.

04. YOUNGER SON

Norman Bates (Bates Motel)



Years of living with these people has driven the youngest sibling to the brink of sanity. He's not strong enough to handle all this trauma, and has developed into an unstable young adult with a short fuse. Don't push him too far or you'll see what he's repressing.

05. DAUGHTER

Laurie Strode (Halloween)



If anyone's got a chance of escaping this crazy family, it's her. Will she be able to leave her horrifying past behind, or will her monstrous relatives drag her down with them? She's got a very good chance of being the final girl.

06. GRANDMOTHER

Grandmama Addams (Addams Family Values)



Grandparents generally act as a reminder of how long the family's traditions or issues have been around. They may complain about the younger family members, but they will always be on time for dinner.

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VERA FARMIGA
Mother Superior

> "UNTIL SHE'S ABLE TO DEAL CORRECTLY WITH THAT TURMOIL WITHIN SHE'S GOING TO BE A MAGNET FOR DISASTER"
> VERA FARMIGA



Farmiga's enthusiasm for both her role and the show is clear.



parents her child. Man, she's just forever struggling to release big-time demons that are within her. And I think that those demons within her, it is a magnetism. In an electromagnetic way, it attracts disaster. She's got this really wickedly complex life within, and it is a magnet. Until she's able to deal correctly with that turmoil within she's going to be a magnet for disaster."

Season One saw Norma's magnetism in full effect, as her choice of lover, Officer Zack Shelby (Mike Vogel), turned out to be a people-smuggling psychopath, and his deeply creepy employer Jake Abernathy (Jere Burns) arrived at the motel to find his missing money after Shelby had been dispatched by Norma's weed-farming elder son Dylan (Max Theriot). Naturally, all this criminal activity pulled Sheriff Romero into her orbit, and the unshakeable lawman's allegiances were kept murky until he put a bullet in Abernathy in the season finale. Farmiga's scenes with Carbonell were definitely among the highlights of the first season, and she tells us that viewers can look forward to seeing their shaky allegiance develop further in Season Two.

"I really love the Romero-Norma relationship," she enthuses. "I think it's really succulent. They're both control freaks, and you've got this push and pull, and both have this level of mystery and complement each other. She is as flamboyant as he is reserved, and I just love who they are together. I think there's this interesting attraction between them as they both fight for control of things. I'm not sure where that's going, but that's the relationship that I'm really eager to explore."

RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN FARMIGA EXPLORE MORE AND MORE CHARACTERS IN GENRE TERRITORY. SINCE 2009'S HUGELY ENTERTAINING, IF HAMMY, ORPHAN, SHE appeared in Duncan Jones' sci-fi *Source Code* and headlined last summer's commercial and critical smash hit horror *The Conjuring*. However, she is reluctant to group her choices together in terms of genre. "I don't know, you can draw similarities, and it's also very easy for me to point out how radically different these roles are, how these stories are," she counters. "Yeah, you could argue that it is dealing with darkness and monsters, but in *Bates Motel* the monster is human, whereas if you're citing *The Conjuring*, for example, those monsters are inhuman. At the same time I just did *At Middleton*, which is a really goofball screwball romantic comedy with Andy Garcia and Taissa [Farmiga], my sister, so I don't know, and the stuff that I'm looking at is radically different from this stuff."

The material may be different, but the excellence of Farmiga's work remains consistent. As we stated at the start of this feature, her presence in *Bates Motel* acted as a guarantee of quality. She continues to make choices based on character, and they continue to be great. "It'll be a female character that really turns my head, that I encounter," she tells us. "Just someone that really gives me whiplash. And I think, 'That's a fascinating gal!' It always stems from character and story."

"At one point I wanted to be a pianist in my career, and I suppose I look at things musically, you know? There are just some characters that present themselves as like playing Chopsticks, and then all of a sudden you get a sense of relief and you say 'Ah! Chopin's Sonata in B-Flat Minor… Yeah, sure, let me at it!' I think Kerry and Carlton Cuse, they complement each other as writers and together… I feel like I've been given a rare gift of a very personal melody."

Bates Motel Season One is out now on Blu-ray and DVD from Universal Pictures.

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THE YELLOW PAGES

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



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What The Strange Colour Of Your Body's Tears can teach us about the golden age of weird horror...

With its lack of logic and lashings of sex and violence, the Giallo provided horror with some of its most talented directors. Now, Bruno Forzani and Hélène Cattet have reconstructed it to create *The Strange Colour Of Your Body's Tears*, the story of Dan (Klaus Tange), a man hunting for his wife and losing his mind. We talk to the filmmakers about creating one of the most stunning multisensory experiences in recent memory.

1. WHAT IS GIALLO?

The Giallo sub-genre began in Italy in the Sixties, as directors like Mario Bava and Dario Argento constructed increasingly labyrinthine and provocative murder mysteries. They became experiences as much as puzzles, with stunning photography and amazing soundtracks setting the scene for gruesome murders. "It's a genre we like because it's playful," enthuses Forzani. "We love the research into the cinematography, editing and settings. There is a special look to the architecture and music, and there is an interesting point of view because the spectator is between the killer and victim's point of view. So you don't feel comfortable, and that's a nice place."

2. GOING TO PIECES

One of the archetypal Giallo themes is the perverted killer of beautiful women. Forzani and Cattet dissect this trope, creating a story in which the tortured hero's sexual history and repressed desires are brought to the surface. As Dan searches for his wife, the boundaries of the real world become meaningless as his psyche threatens to snap. "We wanted to deconstruct a 'whodunnit' to make a 'Who am I?'" Forzani explains. "Something more psychological." "Each time we elements of Giallo to tell a personal story," adds Cattet.

The pair made a splash with the ultra-stylish *Amer*, but this is more ambitious. "It's not only cinematic influences," Cattet continues. "It's architecture, music, dance, comic-books, everything!" Indeed, Forzani says its influences go beyond Giallo. "Directors like David Cronenberg, David Lynch, Dario Argento, Satoshi Kon, Chris Marker, Luis Buñuel, Sergei Eisenstein, Shinya Tsukamoto..."

3. MANSIONS OF MADNESS

The house is as much a character as Dan is. It's almost impossibly ornate and seemingly endless, but the more time we spend in it, the more claustrophobic it becomes. "The architecture was one of the first motivations for making the movie because we wanted to do something very labyrinthine and art-nouveau," Forzani tells us. "It's full of curves, like the storytelling. We wanted to do something like a firework, full of sequences, very playful, very generous."

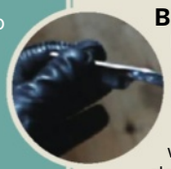
"We used seven houses for the one house of the movie," laughs Cattet. "Most of those are near our apartment in Brussels. So when we walk, it inspired us. A dream in just three metres!"



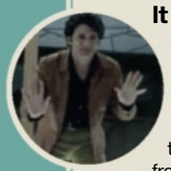
If you're after an easy viewing experience, this isn't it.

GIALLO FOR BEGINNERS

How to know when you're watching a Giallo



Black gloves
Murders will be seen from both the killer and the victim's point of view, and the murderer will be wearing stylish black gloves. If it's an Argento movie, those are his hands doing the strangling.



It looks great
Some of the most visually stylish films of the Sixties and Seventies were Gialli, as directors tried to stand out from the flooded marketplace by establishing their dominance as masters of the genre.



Amazing soundtrack
Giallo soundtracks were never better than those created by Goblin for Dario Argento. Beginning with *Profondo Rosso*, the prog-rockers created deafening but fantastic scores for his finest works.



It doesn't make sense
If you're watching a whodunnit and it doesn't feel like the film cares about whodunnit, you're probably watching a Giallo. The answers aren't as important as the journey; just go with it.



Mad title
Giallo film titles are always elaborate and beguiling: *Blood And Black Lace*, *Lizard In A Woman's Skin*, *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage*. Sometimes they're better than the film.



John Saxon
An American star could often be crucial, and so character actors from the US were added for authenticity. John Saxon was one, and he's always a welcome presence.



4. PARTNERS IN CRIME

The Strange Colour Of Your Body's Tears embraces the sensory experience. The cinematography is stunning, the soundtrack superb and the editing meticulous. Every sequence has been created to provoke, and the pair worked tirelessly to get it right. "I am a big genre fan, and Helene is more into experimental horror," explains Forzani. "For this movie, there are our two personalities, our two universes. We tried to mix them, so I think it's normal that we are in between."

"When we are writing, I make a draft, then Bruno corrects it and makes his draft, then I take it again," laughs Cattet. "So we fight a lot to mix our two universes, then it's the same for the preparation; talking a lot to be on the same wavelength. On the set we do everything together, we share everything, then on post-production we are fighting again! Then it's finished."

5. BUYER BEWARE

So far, *The Strange Colour Of Your Body's Tears* has proved incredibly divisive. Some have found it too violent and sexual, while others have been put off by the lack of story or structure. However, Forzani and Cattet are at peace with its challenging nature.

"We have tried to construct a labyrinth; it's a game," he tells us. "If we show where the issue is, there's no more game. You're supposed to be lost, and some people don't like to be lost."

As exhausting as the creation of the film was, Forzani tells us that the finished product was worth it. "It's very exhausting to make that kind of movie. But when I go to the cinema I want to live an experience, to go out of my life and discover an unknown universe. We try to do all our movies like that."

The Strange Colour Of Your Body's Tears will be released in cinemas on 11 April.

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ON SET FOR HAMMER'S WOMAN IN BLACK FOLLOW-UP **THE QUIET ONES**







Suffer in Silence

WORDS **JAMES HOARE** INTERVIEW **JONATHAN HATFULL**

AS HAMMER'S RESURGENCE CONTINUES, WE GO ON SET FOR ALL-NEW SHOCKER THE QUIET ONES WITH STAR JARED HARRIS AND TALK SCIENCE, SUSHI AND THE SUPERNATURAL...

Ancient evil never truly dies.

A deranged descendent here, a splash of blood on a gravestone there. From 1958 to 1974, Count Dracula and Abraham van Helsing played their deadly dance until, in the end, it wasn't the granite-willed vampire slayer who brought the prince of darkness down; it was Leatherface, Michael Myers and Mia Farrow, her eyes boggling, mouth agape and haircut flawless.

Down for the count, but the count wasn't down. Hammer's 21st Century comeback began slowly with the mistake (*Beyond The Rave*), the misfire (*The Resident*), the sadly misunderstood (*Wake Wood*) and the glorious misappropriation (*Let Me In*), but suddenly the studio's cadaver shot bolt upright in its coffin, eyes ablaze and fangs dripping blood. The intense, window-rattling scares of the Daniel Radcliffe-starring *The Woman In Black* put the studio back at the top of its game over a February weekend in 2012, blacking out all other box office records and setting the stall for a direct sequel – *The Woman In Black: Angels Of Death* – and a thematic one of sorts in *The Quiet Ones*. Helmed by John Pogue (*Quarantine 2: The Terminal*) and overseen by Hammer boss Simon Oakes, like a coach racing the sunrise through Black Park, SciFiNow eagerly joined the cast and crew somewhere just north of London in an all-new haunted house pulled from the mists of England's past.

"Two thirds of it was," deadpans Jared Harris, star of *Fringe* and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows*. "The bit that you didn't see was connected to this really god-awful conference centre, so it was a modern extension they'd built onto this lovely Victorian building. They looked like they'd been conducting animal experiments there."

The building that emerges from the suitably forbidding tangle of weeds and bushes looks like a health spa, and inside production offices cheerily keep tabs on coffee supplies, demo physical effects and make-up like a blood-splattered Q. There's elaborate prosthetic burns you can wear like a face pack, stamps for administering bite marks onto skin and, of course, tons of hairspray.

It's the Seventies rather than the 1870s. Hair is big, shirts are floral and everything is authentically ▷

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HAMMER BY NUMBERS

Everything you need to know about the studio that dripped blood

1934
Founded

$8,000,000
Box office takings for *The Curse Of Frankenstein*

150+
Hammer films made

1955
First horror film, *The Quatermass Xperiment*

$127,730,736
Box office for 2012's *The Woman In Black*



7
Times Christopher Lee played Dracula

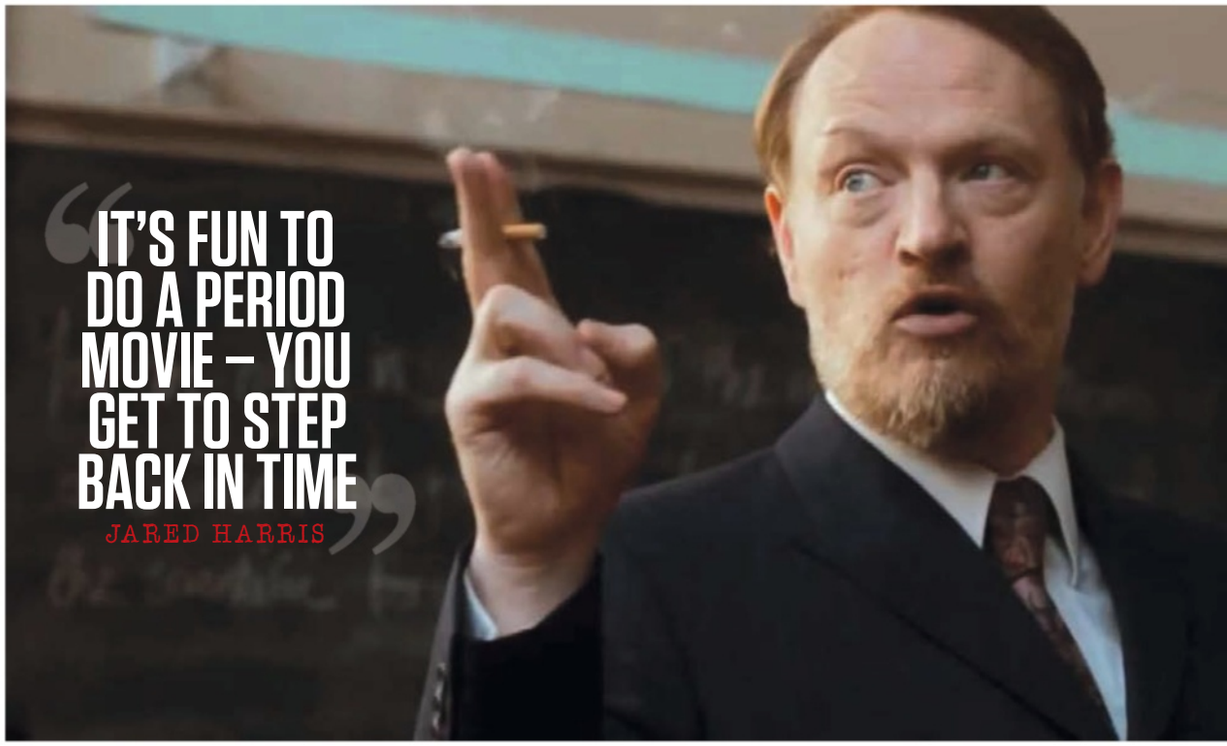
Times Peter Cushing played Baron Frankenstein

1976
Hammer's last horror film of the 20th Century, *To The Devil A Daughter*



THE QUIET ONES
Suffer In Silence

The film-within-a-film aspect of *The Quiet Ones* gives it a haunting feel.



"IT'S FUN TO DO A PERIOD MOVIE – YOU GET TO STEP BACK IN TIME"
JARED HARRIS



Erin Richards and Rory Fleck-Byrne star as two of the professor's assistants.

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SET VISIT

The Quiet Ones

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brown and leathery. As we're shown around, production designer Matt Gant, a veteran of *Life On Mars*, cheerfully recalls the BBC's time-travelling cop show and its signature colour palette of grey-brown that was sloshed over anything out of place with a dismissive "Paint it *grown*."

"It's fun to do a period movie – you get to step back in time," enthuses Harris. "You put the costume on and get to spend time on sets that are specific to you and make them personal, and you make them feel like they're your own."

The converted stables that contain the production offices link up to another block of modern buildings (one room is a hall-like dining area, another a props store full of unused chintz pulled from vintage shops on the off-chance that someone needs a different telephone or hairbrush), which in turn links up to a suitably foreboding Victorian country house. Filmed at an angle to obscure the scale, this becomes the rural cottage retreat of *The Quiet Ones*, where a group of Oxford University students in thrall of the charismatic Professor Coupland (Harris) enact period-exact experiments in parapsychology on a disturbed young woman with the intention of stirring up a supernatural presence. Isolation is the perfect screen for their discredited brand of non-science, and for keeping the barred window behind which the fragile young Jane Harper (*Bates Motel*'s sublime Olivia Cooke) curls up on a mattress, far from prying eyes and medical ethics.

Inside, the set is fascinating in its clutter, strewn with yellowing newspapers, bland-looking science textbooks and cigarette butts, and dressed in authentically ghastly wallpaper, while junk mail piles up on the doormat. But that's not the focus as the scene unfolds; Jane is. We watch on a monitor in the next room as, clad in a nightgown and her dark hair plastered to her scalp, she's hooked up to some sort of neural recorder, all leather straps and polished metal around her temple. She stares dead ahead with hollow eyes, unmoving. Brian (*The Hunger Games*' Sam Claflin) records the experiment on his super-8 camera – a film within a film – while Coupland's acolytes, Kristina (*Being Human* and *Open Grave*'s Erin Richards) and Harry (*Vampire Academy*'s Rory Fleck-Byrne) fuss around. Jane continues to stare. There's a doll on the table in front of her, and almost eagerly Coupland draws her further into that coal-blackened headspace with hypnosis. She leans forward to pick up the doll from the felt of the table. Wherever she is, she's not seeing a doll anymore; she's seeing a baby.

"It's locked in!" hisses Coupland, thrilled.

"It's burning," whines Jane in reply. "It's burning!" – her voice growing more anxious with each cry. "It's burning!"

She throws the doll to the table – her fingers stiff and arms outstretched – and begins to judder and convulse. Coupland rushes forward and others follow, struggling with her small frame as she arches her back in the air between the stunned researchers. A force not of this Earth has taken hold. One of the crew informs us while we watch that smoke will be added to the doll in post-production, while ectoplasm will streak from Jane's open mouth like a tentacle.



***The Quiet Ones* marks another step in Hammer's return to prominence.**

Unreal Estate

Looking to buy? These have just come on the market cheap...

Eel Marsh House

The Woman In Black (2012)



The idyllic rural setting and abundance of character makes this elegant Victorian property ideal for large families, and over the years it has seen plenty of small children call it home, although it is something of a fixer-up. The marshes provide excellent views of wading birds and ominous figures in black.

112 Ocean Avenue

The Amityville Horror (1979)



A striking Dutch colonial-style property with large garden and lake views, 112 Ocean Avenue was recently vacated and is available right away. Be aware that as with all old properties, there are some issues with the plumbing and heating, which would explain the liquid dripping from the walls.

Perron Farm

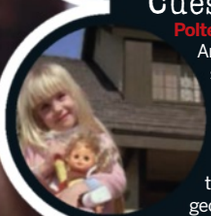
The Conjuring (2013)



A rare opportunity to own an 18th Century farmhouse with a fascinating local history, this property comes with plenty of storage space and original furnishings, including an eye-catching wardrobe and lovely little music box. There's some carpentry required, however, as the cellar door often sticks.

Cuesta Verde

Poltergeist (1982)

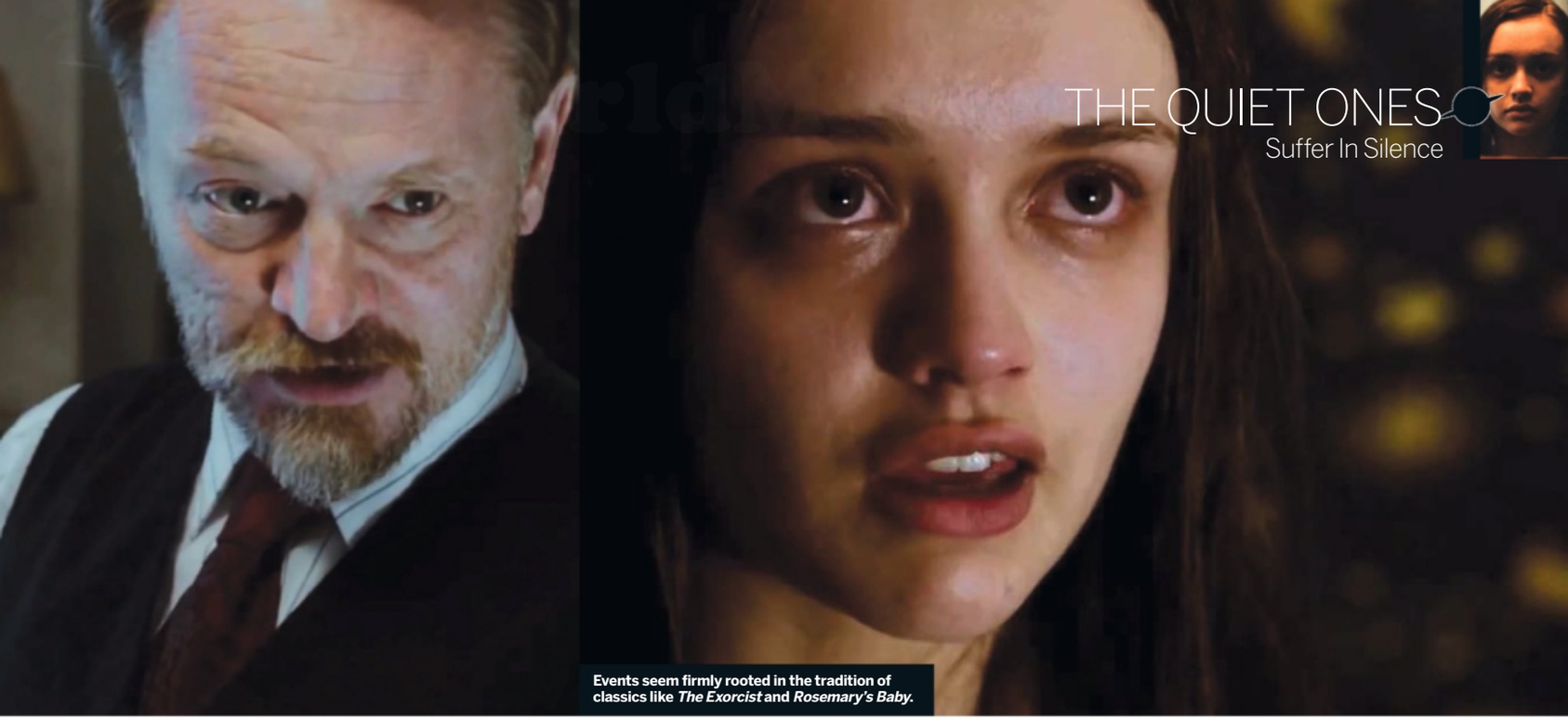


An ultra-modern suburban family home situated in the purpose-built planned community of Cuesta Verde, this property benefits from open living areas and a swimming pool, and is perfect for a new family. Occasionally bones may come to the surface in the garden, but this is simply a geological quirk and nothing the developers feel the need to talk about.



Jared Harris makes for an effectively smarmy lead.

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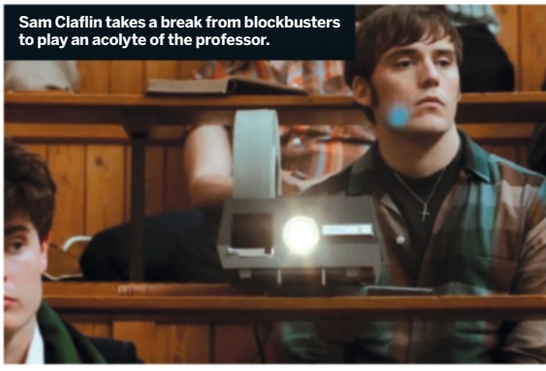
Events seem firmly rooted in the tradition of classics like *The Exorcist* and *Rosemary's Baby*.



Jared Harris relished the opportunity to act up on set.



Olivia Cooke plays Jane, the film's disturbed young victim.



Sam Claflin takes a break from blockbusters to play an acolyte of the professor.

"The intensity comes when there's certain scenes you have to do where you all have to be in the same emotional place," recalls Harris. "Generally, you can tell when you're on set, because it's really quiet and there's a level of concentration you have to maintain, because it's really easy to lose it if people run off and make calls.

"Most of the time," he adds gleefully, "there's opportunities to do some fantastic over-acting, and they're really good fun."

> "WE SHOT THE WARD IN AN INSTITUTION. WHILE WE WERE THERE SOMEONE ESCAPED"
> JARED HARRIS

Behind Coupland's laconic swagger is something darker. *The Quiet Ones* may owe more to the housebound supernatural shockers that drove a stake through the Hammer's heart in the Sixties and Seventies – *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist*, *Burnt Offerings*, *The Legend Of Hell House* and *The Amityville Horror* – but Coupland is an older brand of bounder. Oozing charm and obsession even as events unravel, Coupland is more of an unflinching Baron Frankenstein than a benign Father Karras.

"Yes!" enthuses Harris about the Peter Cushing comparison. "Yes, I can see that, [but] that didn't occur to me at all. My thoughts were really about how to disguise those traditional sinister qualities of the character for as long as possible before you can start to reveal them.

"In the period when we decided what the guy was going to look like, we decided he was going to have a sort of pretentious air about himself, and if anything he's sort of associating himself with the French New Wave, with [composer and poet] Serge Gainsbourg and something like that, who saw themselves as this cutting-edge figure."

Later, after the production breaks for lunch, we see a little bit more of Coupland's temperament. While Jane recovers from her possession – if that's what it was – in her cell (a tattered former nursery with bars on the windows and a heavy metal door that shuts with a clang, the air seeming to grow heavier and more forboding as soon as you cross the threshold), the good professor savours a brandy in his study. He's clearly chuffed, but Kristina is less so as she storms in demanding an explanation for what Harry wryly lampshades as "frigging *Exorcist* shit". With a syrupy-smooth mixture of manipulation and condescension, he gives her the time-honoured 'think of the benefits to mankind… and of your career' speech beloved of mad scientists everywhere. Basically, Harris is having a brilliant time being the centre of attention.

"I love it!" he agrees. "You want that kind of influence; you want that kind of responsibility. You want to reflect the things that are important to you, so in this movie I wanted to be involved in a smart, psychological horror movie, not something that relied on gore, mutilation or anything like that to get the effects out of the audience. It was to do a psychological approach."

His enthusiasm for the smarter, more atmospheric brand of chiller ("*Rosemary's Baby* and stuff like that," he says, outlining his tastes, "stories where you get inside somebody's head rather than having to rely on maiming human-beings") has given Harris a CV that bodes well for *The Quiet Ones* simply by association. The actor has played the morally suspect man of pseudo-science before in John Carpenter's *The Ward* ("We shot that one in a real institution, and while we were there someone escaped," interjects Harris helpfully), and will be ghost-busting again as spurious medium Carrigan Burke in the Sam Raimi-produced *Poltergeist* reboot.

"One of the things that I really admired about John Carpenter was that he would not allow you to have conversations on set," says Harris. "If you wanted to go and talk about something that wasn't to do with this film, you had to go away and have that conversation there. If you want to sit and talk about where you had great sushi last night, wouldn't you rather eat it? Because if you shut up and solve the problems we're trying to solve, you'll finish with enough time for you to go and have that sushi tonight."

Between scenes, we watch on the monitor as make-up artists dance around the cast, dusting cheeks and fixing hair so Seventies-looking that it probably qualifies as a prop. The haunting – and haunted – Cooke remains still, staring dead ahead and never breaking character, while around her conversation bounces back and forth. Claflin is mid-story while Harris chuckles in appreciation. Picking up the headset in the next room, we catch the punchline.

"Your whole life flashes before your eyes," says Claflin, leaning across the felt with his arms open. "And it wasn't even my car!" Nobody will be having sushi tonight.

The Quiet Ones will be released in cinemas on 11 April.

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Photo credit Martin Walter

SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should *Mara*



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AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR STARS OR MORE...

SciFiNow Must see now!

66

THE LEGO MOVIE

"A HILARIOUS ROMP"

TRIVIA THE BRAND 'OCTAN', WHICH HAS FEATURED IN MANY LEGO SETS, IS INCLUDED IN *THE LEGO MOVIE*.

WorldMags.net



FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
U

Directors
Phil Lord, Christopher Miller

Screenwriters
Phil Lord, Christopher Miller, Kevin Hageman, Dan Hageman

Cast
Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, Will Ferrell, Will Arnett, Morgan Freeman

Distributor
Warner Bros

Running Time
100 mins



THE LEGO MOVIE

SciFiNow Must see now!

Master Builders assemble!

The bar was always going to be set high for *The LEGO Movie*. The high-pressure project will be six years in the making by the time of release, and on paper it looks like a surefire hit. Not only are the iconic building blocks a beloved toy of millions the world over, guaranteeing box office millions for the sake of curiosity alone, but the voice cast is one made of Hollywood dreams. It even has Batman.

As the infinitely irritating – yet unstoppably catchy – theme tune assures us, everything about *The LEGO Movie* is awesome. Isn't it? Well… yes it is. That awesome lies, predominantly, in the detail with which animation studio Animal Logic have painted it, cleverly recreating the experience of play we all fondly remember with stop motion and enhancing it with CGI where necessary to make the action not only seamless, but more exciting.

All that's brilliant about LEGO is embodied here and knowingly acknowledged, from the minifigures' funny clawed hands to their spinning heads and interchangeable body parts. Best of all, for both fans and the film's inevitable commercial aspirations, it's no exaggeration to say that the entire film could be built, should any dedicated fanatic wish to take on such a task. From clouds to flames and the sea upon which Nick Offerman's Metalbeard sails his pirate ship, every scene is a loving homage to the toy. And if the thought of that doesn't make you smile, there is absolutely no reason for you to see this film.



However, for those who are grinning from ear-to-ear at the thought of seeing their childhood dreams recreated on the big screen, there's a treat in store, as Chris Pratt's extremely enthusiastic but ever-so lonely hero Emmet finds himself mistaken for someone special.

Unwilling to admit he's ordinary, Emmet must find a way to stop the tyrannical Lord Business (Will Ferrell) from using the fabled 'Kragle' to glue the universe together with the help of a band of misfit minifigures, including female fighter Wyldstyle (Elizabeth Banks), wise elder type Vitruvius (Morgan Freeman, doing his best Gandalf impression), a terrifying anime unicorn/kitten/thing (Alison Brie) and Batman, voiced by a scene-stealing Will Arnett, whose take on the superhero is every bit as enigmatic as Christian Bale's interpretation.

From here, the film heads off on a hilarious, if a little predictable, romp through several LEGO worlds, referencing even more along the way as Emmet struggles to tear up the instructions so strongly ingrained in him courtesy of Business' regime (spot the subtle political undertones) and embrace his inner Master Builder. Hijinks ensue, along with some rather brilliant in-jokes, clever cameos and wonderfully creative action sequences.

Admittedly, it's not all perfect. The movie is heavy with moral message, and though we find empathy with the characters, the emotional connection never quite clicks, which means patience is quickly lost when being emphatically encouraged to use our imaginations for the umpteenth time. The rather puerile snigger response every time a character says "Master Builder" becomes a bit distracting, and the final third of the plot feels like it's trying to be a bit too clever for its own good. But when it comes down to it, Phil Lord and Christopher Miller have delivered on their promise, and in the process made many a childhood dream a reality.

Cat Collins
VERDICT ★★★★☆

NOT-SO TERRIFIC MOVIES BASED ON TOYS

Battleship (2012)
Peter Berg's epic-scaled action-adventure, based on the board game, bored audiences rotten as Taylor Kitsch and Rihanna teamed up to save the world from aliens, logic and reason.

GI Joe: The Rise Of Cobra (2009)
The Global Integrated Joint Operating Entity battled Sienna Miller and Christopher Eccleston in this completely nonsensical, no-brain actioner. So forgettable we're reluctant to remember it.

Transformers (2007)
Michael Bay revelled in blowing stuff up as the battle between the Autobots and Decepticons rained destruction on Earth (also known as the USA), ruining many childhood memories in the process.

Masters Of The Universe (1987)
The first film to be based on a line of toys, this became a cult classic for all the wrong reasons. Dolph Lundgren is as plastic as his character's origins in the role of He-Man, who fights armed with flat dialogue and dead eyes.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Toy Story
Pixar broke ground with this profound 1995 tale about two toys battling to be crowned top toy, learning a few lessons on the way.

TRIVIA THIS IS THE FOURTH FILM FOR MORGAN FREEMAN AND THE THIRD FOR LIAM NEESON THAT FEATURES BATMAN IN SOME CAPACITY.

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I, FRANKENSTEIN

Dead on the table

Details 12A // 92 mins // Out now **Director** Stuart Beattie **Screenwriter** Stuart Beattie **Cast** Aaron Eckhart, Yvonne Strahovski, Bill Nighy, Miranda Otto, Jai Courtney, Caitlin Stasey **Distributor** Entertainment Film



We're not very far into Stuart Beattie's gloomy adaptation of Kevin Grevioux's comic-book before it becomes abundantly clear what we're in for. Po-faced exposition establishes an ancient war between gargoyles (angels, for all intents and purposes) and demons, both of who have an interest in Frankenstein's monster (Aaron Eckhart), who is given the name Adam and a pair of sanctified sticks to fight the forces of evil.

The influence of Len Wiseman's *Underworld* films (also co-written by Grevioux) is so strongly felt that you could be forgiven for thinking you're watching the next instalment in the series: there's the unnamed probably Eastern European city of perpetual night and Gothic architecture; slo-mo fighting in long coats, and a wilful lack of a sense of humour. There's even Bill Nighy as dapper demon prince Niberius, and the twinkle in his eye as he snarls reprimands at a subordinate is the closest the film comes to having fun.



Eckhart is clearly committed to carrying the film, delivering a fearsome glower and a gravelly growl, but he's hamstrung by a script in which the dialogue involves either exposition or reiterating the plot for anyone who's not keeping up (which in turn makes every character, immortal or not, seem utterly brainless). Giving him lines like "Your boss is a demon prince" is more than a bit of a waste. The rest of the cast suffer in a similar manner, with Yvonne Strahovski's scientist functioning more as a plot propulsion device than as an actual character, and Miranda Otto's gargoyle queen is mostly called upon to deliver haughty outrage and dispatch her winged muscle, played by Jai Courtney and Caitlin Stasey.

Still, some of its faults could have been forgiven if *I, Frankenstein* delivered on its action set pieces. However, while the idea of winged gargoyles fighting demons sounds fun in theory, poor CGI and a lack of visual flair makes the whole thing more of a daft curiosity than a thrill. Eckhart gives it his all, but this slight variation on a tired theme lacks any spark of life.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Blade
Manages to be stylish and exciting while retaining a sense of humour.



SciFiNow Must see now!

THE DOUBLE

Knowing me, knowing you

Details 15 // 93 mins // 4 April **Director** Richard Ayoade **Screenwriters** Richard Ayoade, Avi Korine **Cast** Jesse Eisenberg, Mia Wasikowska, Wallace Shawn, Noah Taylor **Distributor** Studio Canal



With a grimly familiar undated dystopia, a trampled hero and a blonde woman providing the only source of light in a corporate hell, *The Double* is as indebted to Gilliam's masterpiece *Brazil* as Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel.

Jesse Eisenberg is Simon, a man who goes through his life almost unnoticed. He lives alone in a small flat, watching his beautiful colleague and neighbour Hannah (Mia Wasikowska) through a telescope. One day, he arrives at work to find James, his exact double, working there. He's more confident and popular, and seems open to the idea of helping Simon talk to Hannah. However, it soon becomes clear that James has different plans.

Ayoade's debut *Submarine* hid its heart beneath stylistic flourishes and an acerbic wit. Anyone looking for a similar sense of romanticism in *The Double* will have to look a lot harder, however. Simon isn't too different from a lot of sad-sack hopeless romantic indie leads, but Ayoade and Avi Korine's script doesn't do him any favours purely because he's good-natured. The world of *The Double* is an almost unremittingly cold one, and the fantasy heroism of the TV sci-fi star (played by Paddy Considine) Simon likes remains just as cold.

The debt to *Brazil*, as well as David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, will rub some up the wrong way, but Ayoade makes his combination of British and American corporate hells uniquely awful. The main problem is that he doesn't seem sure how to fill the time in the second half, with a few cameos feeling forced.

It's beautifully detailed and darkly funny, and Eisenberg is superb. Its icy chilliness won't be for everyone, but it's a striking and darkly comic character(s) study that refuses to compromise its worldview. It's difficult to love, and all the more impressive for it.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

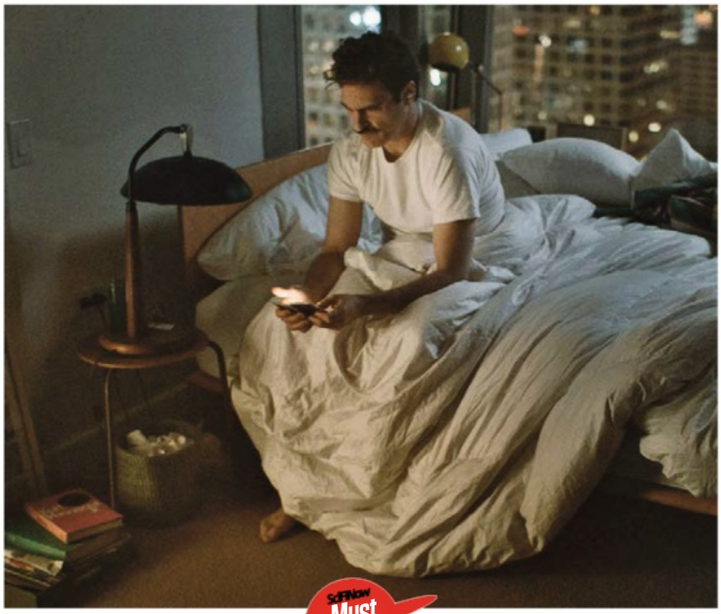


Antiviral
Brandon Cronenberg skewers celebrity obsession in this wintry satire.

TRIVIA *I, FRANKENSTEIN* WAS ORIGINALLY SET FOR RELEASE IN FEBRUARY 2013.

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HER

Internet dating

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 126 mins // Out now **Director** Spike Jonze **Screenwriter** Spike Jonze **Cast** Joaquin Phoenix, Amy Adams, Rooney Mara, Scarlett Johansson **Distributor** Warner Bros



Science fiction has long imagined the sociological future; of how technology will change the way we'll interact, relate and love. But in a time of internet dating and social media, the time for imagining has gone; now is the time to ponder what it means for us. This, more or less, is the question posed by Spike Jonze's strangely poignant post-modern rom-com *Her*.

Set in a 2025 Los Angeles, it pivots around the ridiculously named Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix): a lonely, sensitive, introverted man caught up in a bitter ongoing divorce from childhood sweetheart, Catherine (Rooney Mara). For work, he writes love letters for the inarticulate in a 'creative' office space. When Theodore buys a new software package, a hyper-sophisticated artificial intelligence called Samantha (voiced by Scarlett Johansson), he falls in love.



In an age where you can feel like you 'know' someone without ever actually meeting, is it so far-fetched? Maybe, but Jonze – at first, at least – does a good job of managing its plausibility, presenting his concept with just the right amount of wry self-awareness to balance out the absurd whimsy of its sincerity.

Of course, the whole thing wouldn't work if it wasn't for Johansson. With just a voice, she delivers one of the best performances of her career; believably flirty, funny and, most of all, human. She stands in stark contrast to Theodore himself, who feels bizarrely detached and contrived.

As Samantha learns and grows, she yearns for form – even going as far as to pay a 'surrogate' to have sex for her. Ultimately, however, the vital questions and touching moments outstay their welcome in a tiresomely meandering third act. Nonetheless, it's not the body that counts; it's the mind.

Stephen Kelly

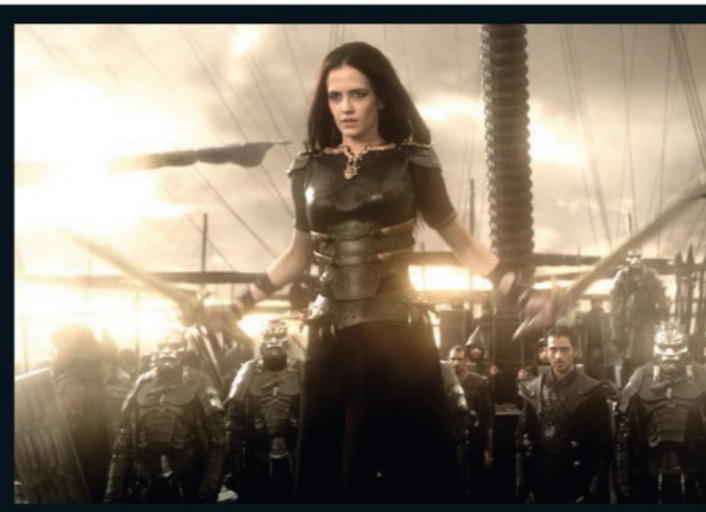
VERDICT ★★★★☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



AI: Artificial Intelligence

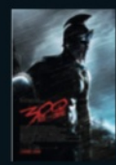
With similar themes, *AI* may have influenced *Her*.



300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE

Generals gather in their masses, just like surprisingly poor rhyming couplets

Details 15 // 102 mins // Out now **Director** Noam Murro **Screenwriters** Zack Snyder, Kurt Johnstad **Cast** Sullivan Stapleton, Eva Green, Lena Headey, Rodrigo Santoro, David Wenham, Jack O'Connell **Distributor** Warner Bros



300 was hard to ignore, exhibiting stylised violence, shiny leather pants and an up-and-coming cast, including instant meme generator Gerard Butler, the once and future Magneto (Michael Fassbender) and even a queen of Westeros (Lena Headey). It was raucous and silly, but had its own shallow charm when taken as an over-the-top campfire story.

300: Rise Of An Empire is based on Frank Miller's as-yet-unpublished graphic novel *Xerxes*, explaining how he became a god-king as well as the enmity between Greece and Persia. But this is *300* – history is so far in the back seat it's practically in the boot.

The action takes place before, during and after the Spartans' last stand, flashing back to how the death of Xerxes' father transformed him into the imposing despot of the first movie and where his great war machine moved next after their victory against the Spartans.

Athenian general Themistocles (Sullivan Stapleton) leads the Greek defence by sea, resplendent in blue like a palette-swapped Leonidas, minus the charisma. The Persian fleet opposing him is led by vengeful commander Artemisia (Eva Green), a Greek woman with a score to settle.

She is the one pulling Xerxes' strings, and this is more her story than his. Artemisia falls into the 'bad-ass fantasy woman' trap, and although Green is game, the character lacks the elegant nihilism of, say, Headey's performance as the mesmerising Ma-Ma in *Dredd*. Speaking of Lena, she does return as Queen Gorgo, but isn't used as much as the trailer would have you believe.

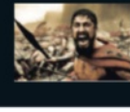
The naval battles are impressive, and director Noam Murro replicates Zack Snyder's visual style well. But something is off. Xerxes' transformation feels uncomfortable, Artemisia and Themistocles' sexual encounter is cringeworthy, and we've heard all this posturing about glory and death before.

Miller mythologised the story of the 300 Spartans, making it a tale told to rouse the troops, but repeating the formula a second time compounds the already problematic depictions of real cultures to an uncomfortable degree. Moreover, it's just not that entertaining.

Krystal Sim

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



300

Leonidas shouts his way to meme immortality in Snyder's slo-mo deathfest, with lashings of CGI bloody splatters.

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TRIVIA SAMANTHA MORTON WAS ORIGINALLY THE VOICE OF SAMANTHA IN *HER*, BUT WAS RE-CAST AND RE-RECORDED WITH SCARLETT JOHANSSON AFTER SPIKE JONZE FELT THAT SOMETHING WASN'T QUITE RIGHT.

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FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
12A

Director
José Padilha

Screenwriter
Joshua Zetumer

Cast
Joel Kinnaman, Samuel L Jackson, Gary Oldman, Michael Keaton, Abbie Cornish

Distributor
StudioCanal

Running Time
118 mins



ROBOCOP

Serve the public trust, protect the innocent, uphold the law

The latest in a long line of remakes comes in the form of José Padilha's update on Paul Verhoeven's 1987 sci-fi classic, *RoboCop*. A film full of violence, black comedy and social satire, the original movie holds up to this day – so much so that many simply couldn't see the point of a reboot at all.

The good news is that while there are certainly many similarities between the two, Padilha's take isn't a clone by any means. Instead of commentary on the Eighties obsession with consumerism, it explores much more modern concerns about media influence, the information age and the US's involvement in the Middle East. The dark humour, meanwhile, is replaced with a rather earnest sensibility and gruesome graphic violence with 12A-appropriate action.

The revamped film sees Joel Kinnaman take on the role of street-smart, tough-talking cop and loving family man Alex Murphy, whose vendetta against villain Antoine Vallon (Patrick Garrow) results in his car going boom and a difficult choice for his wife (Abbie Cornish).



Unable to cope with the idea of losing her fatally injured husband altogether, she is convinced by Machiavellian corporate boss Raymond Sellars (Michael Keaton, on wonderfully oily form) and genius scientist Dennett Norton (Gary Oldman) to allow what's left of him to undergo an experimental procedure. The result, of course, is a half-robot, half-human hybrid – a prototype law enforcement droid that OmniCorp are hoping a largely robo-phobic public might be willing to accept due to its capacity for empathy. But ultimately, corporate pressure forces Norton to remove the man bit by bit, until all that's left is a disturbingly cold machine.

Though the movie is ostensibly about the titular RoboCop, the more human aspect of Murphy's tale takes precedence. Where Verhoeven stayed away from sentimentality, Padilha embraces it, presenting Murphy's humanity as both a weakness and strength. But without the humour that came from the forerunner's unflinching and unsympathetic lack of personality, efforts to make us feel something unfortunately fall flat. By the time Murphy awakens to discover the monster that has been made of him, we're so desperate to see him shoot someone out of a window, stab a guy in the neck or send someone flying into a toxic waste dump that we can barely bring ourselves to share his heartbreak.

That's not to say there's no upside to this movie; this is a *RoboCop* for a new generation, and there's tons of fun to be gained in seeing the cyborg, upgraded with a sleek, modern black suit and new-fangled CGI, wipe the floor with the other 'bots during the obligatory training sequence – not to mention the more explosive action that comes later.

And then there's the cast – putting Samuel L Jackson, Oldman and Keaton on the same screen is simply greatness on top of greatness on top of greatness. For his part, Kinnaman doesn't do a bad job either. Though he's at first a little wooden, the actor meets the challenge of acting within the confines of his robo-suit with success.

Ultimately, despite Padilha's efforts to put a human face to this story, *RoboCop* misses both the opportunity and the point. It's perfectly enjoyable, but nothing special.

Cat Collins
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

CYBORGS ON THE BIG SCREEN

Marcus Wright (Terminator Salvation)
"I'm the only hope you have." It took a while, but *Terminator Salvation* finally gave us a robot with real human bits in the form of former death row inmate Marcus Wright. He might be a tin man, but he proves he has a heart when he joins the Resistance and saves the day.

Del Spooner (I, Robot)
"What makes your robots so perfect?"
A police officer with a dark secret, Del Spooner's prejudice against robots is wonderfully complicated, because it's all tied to the guilt he feels about surviving a car accident when a little girl died. His robotic arm, replacement ribs and artificial lung come in handy, though.

Darth Vader (Star Wars)
"Don't underestimate the Force." Possibly the most iconic film villain of all time, after being critically wounded Anakin Skywalker got himself a robotic upgrade. With the technology came a rather mean disposition and terrifying moniker as the Sith Lord wreaked destruction upon his old Jedi Order.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



RoboCop (1987)
27 years old, and still as funny, poignant and satisfying as it was on release, Paul Verhoeven's sci-fi satire is a classic.

TRIVIA LOOK OUT FOR A CAMEO FROM THE ORIGINAL 1987 ROBOSUIT, BEFORE SELLARS REQUESTS A "TACTICAL", "BLACK" UPDATE.

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ENDER'S GAME

Formically challenged

Details 12 // 114 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray · blinkbox · LOVEFILM // **Released** Out now **Director** Gavin Hood **Cast** Asa Butterfield, Hailee Steinfeld, Harrison Ford **Distributor** Entertainment One



Much of the publicity for this film adaptation was centred around the homophobic personal views of book author Orson Scott Card and whether his work deserved a place on the big screen, but ultimately the most offensive thing about *Ender's Game* is just how mediocre it is.

Not bad, exactly; just mediocre. Director Gavin Hood's tendency to leave his subject material a bland husk of its former self was already evident (see *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. Actually, don't) and should have acted as a warning sign, but the disappointment at seeing just to what extent the better elements of the original novel have been ridden roughshod over in favour of copious quantities of shoehorned-in exposition is just as palpable.

The cast fare little better. Asa Butterfield has proven himself to be a capable actor elsewhere, but his Ender is *The Big Bang Theory*'s Sheldon Cooper crossed with Hayden Christensen's Anakin Skywalker, with any complexity to his character abandoned in favour of brief allusions to a less-than-savoury relationship with his psychopathic brother that even then is barely touched on. Meanwhile, Harrison Ford continues on his prior career trajectory, all gruff mannerisms but little actual nuance to set him apart from any of his roles from the past decade, while the talented likes of Nonso Anozie and Viola Davis are reduced to the ciphers of shouty instructor and good cop to Ford's bad respectively.

Almost everything about *Ender's Game* seems misjudged, which even extends to the action scenes. Predominantly taking the form of training sequences and with minimal room for danger, they are shorn of any urgency or dramatic tension, at times coming across more like a videogame tutorial level.

This was clearly designed as a precursor to a wider series, but not enough time has been spent on giving us a reason to care about the characters, with Hood instead choosing to over-load proceedings with excessive exposition relating to past events that are rarely shown. The ending leaves room for a sequel, but ultimately no reason to care enough to return.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Super 8
Succeeds in every area that *Ender's Game* fails, with both tension and characters to root for.

IN FEAR

Clunk click

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 85 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray · blinkbox // **Released** Out now **Director** Jeremy Lovering **Cast** Iain De Caestecker, Alice Englert, Allen Leech **Distributor** StudioCanal



The paranoiac road horror is so seldom revisited that it's easy to forget just how effective it can be.

Like 1986's *The Hitcher* and 1971's *Duel*, the focus is on the reduced cast and the tension that spools out from their every twist of the steering wheel as Tom (*Agents Of SHIELD*'s Iain De Caestecker) and Lucy (*Beautiful Creatures*' Alice Englert) find themselves circling a labyrinth of pitch black country roads. Becoming increasingly lost, the couple find out just how little they know each other, and as the tension mounts so does the suspicion. For a split second we're encouraged to think that maybe, just maybe, it's Tom who's behind all this, but the ambiguity is short-lived and



the conflict evaporates, replaced instead by the knuckle-whitening cat-and-mouse of a slasher movie.

The escalation is deft as nerve-rattling tensions gives way to shocking violence, but so much time is invested in picking apart the rough stitching that binds Tom and Lucy that it feels a touch wasted.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★☆

THE HAUNTING IN CONNECTICUT 2: GHOSTS OF GEORGIA

Ghost

Details 15 // 101 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray · blinkbox · iTunes // **Released** Out now **Director** Tom Elkins **Cast** Abigail Spencer, Chad Michael Murray, Katee Sackhoff **Distributor** Lionsgate



This sequel to the 2009 horror flick opens with the bold 'based on the true story' claim before setting off down a hokey, well-trodden path, with the Wyrick family buying a house in the Georgia countryside that turns out to have been part of the underground railroad. Mum Lisa (Abigail Spencer) and her sister Joyce (Katee Sackhoff) can see spirits, and it soon turns out that young Heidi (Emily Alyn Lind) has inherited this ability. Are the local spectres friends or foes?

There's more working in the film's favour than meets the eye. Spencer, Sackhoff and Chad Michael Murray



make for likeable leads, and it's nice to see a ghost story set outside the confines of affluent suburbia. However, it's all extremely familiar, and the hard-won good will begins to run out around the half-way point. It's well-acted, but ultimately syrupy and derivative.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

TRIVIA *THE PHANTOM MENACE* STAR JAKE LLOYD WAS ORIGINALLY SLATED TO PLAY ENDER WHEN PROPOSALS FOR A FILM WERE FIRST MOOTED.

THE HUNGER GAMES: CATCHING FIRE

A scorching sequel

SciFiNow Must see now!



Details 12 // 146 mins // 2013 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // **Released** 17 March
Director Francis Lawrence **Cast** Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Elizabeth Banks, Sam Claflin **Distributor** Lionsgate Home Entertainment



Katniss is making history, both onscreen and off. In the world of Panem she's becoming a symbol of rebellion, giving hope to the oppressed citizens of this dystopian universe, and in real life she's the star of the first female-led film to come out on top since 1973's *The Exorcist*.

It's a testament to Jennifer Lawrence's performance that it's powerful enough to distract from the movie's shortcomings, namely Josh Hutcherson's gormless Peeta and the increasingly one-note President Snow (Donald Sutherland).

Round two of the Games follows a familiar format as we spend time in the bleak districts before names are drawn from a hat and, after a brief visit to the circus of the Capitol, Katniss is left panting and screaming in the arena. This time, however, she's joined by fellow former victors in a cruel spin on the annual Hunger Games. It's to celebrate the 75th anniversary, and is a plausible enough excuse to relive the thrills and tension of the constant threat of death. But the build-up is where we see Lawrence's best work.

The Girl on Fire is dampened with PTSD and must face the families of those she killed in a Victors' Tour of the districts. Director Francis Lawrence has deftly realised the grave world post-Games, which now includes public whippings and executions in a bid to stamp out insurgency. Death scenes take place just out of sight, but Lawrence's distraught reactions will hammer home the horror. Indeed, once the Games begin the contestants are confronted with man-eating monkeys and poisonous fog that disfigures Katniss and her allies.

The young heroine benefits from having Finnick (Sam Claflin), Mags (Lynn Cohen) and other characters to bounce off, and the casting is as faithful to the book as the screenplay. Unfortunately, this extends to the rushed ending, which might leave non-readers baffled by the blur of action.

It's heart-pummelling stuff, and that final scene, although similar to that of *Breaking Dawn Part One*, will have you gunning for the next instalment.

Jodie Tyley
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Cabin In The Woods
A group of young people are thrown into a deadly situation.

WHO'S CHANGING

Space and whine

Details N/A // 81 mins // 2013 // DVD **Released** Out now
Director Cameron K McEwan **Cast** Neve McIntosh, Louise Jameson, Dan Starkey, Simon Fisher-Becker, Sophie Aldred **Distributor** Capital City Entertainment



It's not just *Doctor Who* that's at a crossroads: it's fandom too. Ranging from a broken biscuit pick'n'mix of figures within or on the periphery of the show to fan interviews, fan-funded doc *Who's Changing: An Adventure In Time With Fans* stumbles backwards toward having a point.

Leap-frogging from talking head to talking head has the side effect of giving everything that is said equal importance, from insulting and asinine observations about romance being "for the wives" to quite succinct points about the shifting appeal of the show. *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society founder Jan Vincent-Rudzki in particular rounds on self-parody, jutting out from between clips of young gender-swap cosplayers



like an unexploded World War II doodlebug as he kicks out at the word 'Whovian' and people who 'fancy' the Doctor.

There's a handful of really interesting points among it all, but it's all too easily buried under a chorus of hectoring. In this at least, it's consistent with *Who* fandom.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

WE ARE WHAT WE ARE

We are what we eat

Details 18 // 105 mins // 2013 // DVD · iTunes // **Released** Out now
Director Jim Mickle **Cast** Bill Sage, Julia Garner **Distributor** Entertainment One



Feted as one of 2013's best horrors, rare credible remake *We Are What We Are* delivers on its hype with such dizzying skill that you wonder how so many other films manage to get made.

Soulfully constructed out of America's rural angst by Jim Mickle, director of the patina-flecked *Stake Land*, *We Are What We Are* is at its heart a compelling thriller and family drama that has horror smeared across its mouth like fresh blood as a cannibal clan, led by a terse and threatening Bill Sage (*Boardwalk Empire*), finds itself at breaking point with their matriarch dead, the children torn between worlds, the town flooded and the authorities on their trail. Sage is a titan as Frank

SciFiNow Must see now!



Parker, but it's daughters Iris (*The Master*'s Ambyr Childers) and Rose (*Martha Marcy May Marlene*'s Julia Garner) who draw you in with their quiet desperation.

As the rain falls and the river rises, the Parkers' world is washed away. The all-pervasive dampness and rot of the setting seeps into the bones of the whole film.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★★

WorldMags.net

TRIVIA JENNIFER LAWRENCE SUFFERED REAL-LIFE INJURIES FROM THE GAMES, INCLUDING BEING HIT WITH HER OWN BOW AND LEFT PARTIALLY DEAF FOR SIX DAYS.

WorldMags.net

DEAD OF NIGHT

Tales of the unexpected

Details PG // 103 mins // 1945 // DVD Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Directors** Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden, Robert Hamer **Cast** Mervyn Johns, Michael Redgrave, Googie Withers **Distributor** Studio Canal



Anthology horrors have undergone a real renaissance over the last couple of years, with *The ABCs Of Death* and *V/H/S* attempting to bring the trend back. However, none have ever matched 1945 Ealing classic *Dead Of Night*, the seminal feature which both defined and nigh-on perfected the format.

Nervy architect Walter Craig (Melvyn Johns) turns up at a country house to find a group of people he has seen in a dream. As he attempts to convince them that he has seen all this before, each of the guests relates a story of a time when they have confronted the inexplicable or supernatural.

This wrap-around structure works as a wonderful introduction to the eerie, off-key tone of the film, as Craig struggles to make sense of his situation, horribly aware that something is very, very wrong.

The accepted wisdom is that anthology horrors will have at least one terrible segment and maybe only one truly great one. While *Dead Of Night* does have one absolute stand-out, each of its instalments are consistently excellent. Even the comedy segment about the two golfers fighting over the same woman – which is generally regarded as the worst – only gets better on repeat viewings as progressively darker subtext is unearthed.

The 'Sardines' Christmas party story still sends a shiver down the spine as young Sally (Sally Ann Howes) insists that she isn't frightened, and the segment about the haunted mirror packs a real punch, with Joan's (Googie Withers) new husband seeing a new life for himself without her. The 'Hearse Driver' sequence is perhaps the least eventful, but like the wraparound, it establishes an unsettling atmosphere that proves difficult to shake off.

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Best of all, of course, is the 'Ventriloquist's Dummy' sequence, with Michael Redgrave's absolutely stunning performance as Maxwell Frere and his talkative, sinister dummy Hugo. Redgrave is pitch-perfect as we grapple with the question of whether Maxwell is insane, or if Hugo has somehow come to life. The segment has one of the most chilling endings in horror history, leading into a stunning and hugely unsettling finale.

Every rewatch of *Dead Of Night* serves to confirm its place as one of the genre's finest works, and this restoration is an excellent excuse to watch it again.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Magic
Anthony Hopkins is brilliant in this story of a ventriloquist who is too attached to his dummy.

ORCA: THE KILLER WHALE

Thar she blows

Details 15 // 88 mins // 1977 // DVD · iTunes // **Released** 14 April **Director** Michael Anderson **Cast** Richard Harris, Charlotte Rampling, Will Sampson **Distributor** Studio Canal



Orca: The Killer Whale takes on a slightly different context in a world where a lot of us have wept through the documentary *Blackfish*. That being said, there's a surprising amount of respect for the aquatic mammal in this hugely entertaining mishmash of *Moby Dick* and creature feature.

Richard Harris plays Nolan, a fisherman with no apparent moral qualms about the nature of his business. This all changes when his hunt for an orca results in the gory death of a pregnant creature in front of its mate. The male orca marks Nolan for death, and will not stop tormenting him until he has his vengeance.

The tonal shifts, from gory B-movie shocks to Herman Melville-esque wonder at the power of nature, make it a compelling oddity. Harris sinks his teeth into the role of Nolan, playing both the heartless bastard and awe-inspired convert wonderfully, and Charlotte Rampling offers good moral outrage as the marine biologist who pops up to provide exposition.

SciFiNow Must see now!



Muddled but marvellous, *Orca* manages to transcend its status as a simple *Jaws* rip-off to be a great man-vs-nature film in its own right.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

STALLED

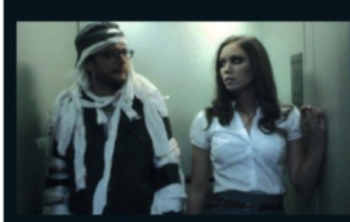
Don't flush

Details 18 // 84 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Christian James **Cast** Dan Palmer, Antonia Bernath, Tamaryn Payne **Distributor** Matchbox Films



You'd be forgiven for thinking that zom-coms had run out of end-of-the-world scenarios, but Dan Palmer and Christian James have taken the trend to perhaps its logical conclusion. A janitor (Palmer) gets trapped in the ladies' toilet when a couple of girls walk in, then gets properly stranded when a zombie outbreak overruns the building.

This low-budget British comedy makes the most of its limitations, stranding its hero in a single location and forcing him to examine the life choices that have led him here. There's a welcome combination of gross-out humour, cynicism and heart, and Palmer makes a decent lead, working well off the unseen voice of the girl who is similarly stranded two stalls down.



It's a testament to the filmmakers' inventiveness that the film doesn't drag as much as you might think. For the most part it's a fun and surprisingly emotional spin on a well-worn sub-genre that only really begins to outstay its welcome towards the end. It does occasionally feel a bit familiar, and may well have worked better as a short, but a surprisingly bittersweet sense of humour and a real effort to develop its characters make it worth a look for low-budget horror fans.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

WorldMags.net

TRIVIA THE CHRISTMAS PARTY SEGMENT IN *DEAD OF NIGHT* WAS BASED ON THE REAL MURDER CASE OF FRANCIS SAVILLE KENT.



GRAVITY

SciFiNow Must see now!

Marooned with a view

Details 12 // 91 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray 3D · blinkbox · iTunes // **Released** Out now **Director** Alfonso Cuarón **Cast** Sandra Bullock, George Clooney **Distributor** Warner Bros



Trying to resist the gravitational pull of this film is futile. Right from the breathtaking 13-minute uncut opening we were fully immersed in its world.

And when things go catastrophically wrong – which they do unnervingly fast – we are left gasping for air just like the stranded spacenauts. Living the next 91 minutes in a primitive state of fear for our heroine – her air, fuel and sanity slowly ebbing away as infinite isolation creeps in – we're constantly reminded of director Alfonso Cuarón's bold opening caption: 'Life in space is impossible.' You suspect you're in for an epic survival story, but a series of heart-stopping near-misses never allow you to believe she's ever truly going to make it.

The astonishing story is told in real time, instilling a pounding sense of urgency, while the spot-on science outs this film as a space thriller rather than sci-fi. Indeed, you don't realise just how seriously the filmmakers took this 3D blockbuster until you watch the special features on the Blu-ray. Shot-by-shot breakdowns hammer home the complexity of this project and revealing interviews make you marvel at the supernova of themes and metaphors that have highjacked Alfonso and his son Jonás' script.

Their self-imposed mission was to create a thrill-ride of a film about a journey of cosmic rebirth that's reinforced by striking visuals of space suits attached to their station like fetuses connected by an umbilical cord against the backdrop of Mother Earth. It was for this reason that the central character was always destined to be a woman, even before they christened her Dr Ryan Stone.

Sandra Bullock delivers a hefty performance in spite of her zero gravity surroundings; every longing look at Earth and slow-mo spin plays out like beautifully choreographed ballet. She's an Ellen Ripley for a new generation, with the power to make you feel weightless and unstoppable. There are few films that most people agree on, but *Gravity* has swept us all into its orbit.



Jodie Tyley
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Moon
Less shouty, but contains a similarly masterful performance from a lonely soul in space.

PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE

SciFiNow Must see now!

Soul music

Details 15 // 92 mins // 1974 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Director Brian De Palma **Cast** William Finley, Paul Williams, Jessica Harper
Distributor Arrow



Before Brian De Palma made *Carrie*, he staged an outsider's betrayal in a gloriously OTT satirical setting, skewering the music industry and chart-topping trends.

William Finley plays Winslow Leach, a quiet genius who is conned by music tycoon Swan (Paul Williams) into signing over his masterpiece. Winslow is disfigured during a rage-filled rampage, but agrees to work with him to give the beautiful Phoenix (Jessica Harper) the music that will make her a star, but at what price?

De Palma's love of lavish visuals, elaborate set pieces and swagger is very much in evidence as the camera swoops around Swann's



nightclub The Paradise, preening musicians perform for adoring audiences and Alfred Hitchcock homages abound. The music itself, written by Williams, is fantastic, and the cast all revel in the high camp.

Arrow's Blu-ray restoration is fantastic; the documentary includes frank and funny memories from all involved, and Guillermo del Toro pops up for a long interview with Williams about his life in music.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

THE BORDERLANDS

SciFiNow Must see now!

Most haunted

Details 15 // 89 mins // 2013 // DVD // **Released** 7 April **Director** Elliot Goldner
Cast Gordon Kennedy, Robin Hill, Luke Neal **Distributor** Metrodome



The recent glut of found-footage horror flicks has made it easy to be snobby about the sub-genre, but by combining the wobbly-cam technique with a strong script and excellent central performances, *The Borderlands* is a chilling reminder of the format's potential.

Veteran investigator Deacon (Gordon Kennedy) and mouthy techie Gray (Robin Hill) arrive in a small village to investigate an apparent miracle in a small church. Is it a fake, or is something more sinister taking place?

Anchoring the film in the everyday stands the film in very good stead as it enters its second half. Some well-deployed scares keep the tension high, and the mystery of what is going on is



developed at a deliberate and effective pace. There's a real sense of menace that doesn't just come from its chosen camera technique.

Excellent sound design and that strong sense of pacing ensures that the film's grip on the viewer doesn't stop tightening. There's a wobble or two as the film heads into its final third, but it builds to a strong finish. This is a tense, atmospheric chiller that will send a shiver down your spine and definitely make you jump.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

WorldMags.net

TRIVIA ED HARRIS PLAYS THE OFF-SCREEN VOICE OF MISSION CONTROL IN *GRAVITY*.

WorldMags.net



Season Two

ALPHAS

Not top dog

Details 15 // 540 mins // DVD · iTunes // 17 March **Creators** Zak Penn, Michael Karnow **Cast** David Strathairn, Warren Christie, Ryan Cartwright, Laura Mennell, Malik Yoba, Azita Ghanizada **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



In storytelling there is nothing inherently wrong with a derivative premise. Shows such as *Supernatural* and *Stargate Atlantis* prove as much, and *Alphas* might have too, in light of its promising first season. Yet, Season Two provides equally persuasive evidence that when you go where others have gone before, you must have something new to say.

Throughout its debut season, *Alphas* benefited from snappy dialogue and crisply choreographed action. Beneath the gloss, though, was a reliance on procedural thrills inherited from *The X-Files* and a conceit involving enhanced humans that had been worn thin by the likes of *Heroes* and *The 4400*.

Nonetheless, Season Two had room to grow. In the first season's finale, society was forced to acknowledge the existence of humans with abilities such as immortality, enhanced senses and super strength. From there, the series could easily have segued into speculation on how real technological advances in human potential might exaggerate divisions between haves and have-nots.

Instead, it essentially voids Season One's game-changing climax and reverts to the same clichéd freak-of-the-week formula that its predecessor got away with. Worse still, it dumbs down the issues to a mundane conflict between 'us and them' in which the latter seem almost unambiguously evil because of their selfish agenda.

The good guys don't fare much better. There's a touching back story for Nina (Laura Mennell) and a heart-wrenching arc involving two of the other main characters. Yet, there's little indication that anyone has a life outside the office. The time devoted to character development is further limited by the unnecessary introduction of 20-something whiz-kid Kat (Erin Way), whose contrived integration is out of sync with the show's edgy realism.

The upshot of all this is a failure to expand *Alphas*' mythology beyond the conventions of its sub-genre. With that comes the dubious honour of being up there with *Star Trek* on the list of series that faltered because we'd seen it all before.

Michael Simpson

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Being Human (US)
The superhumans are supernatural in this impressive Canada-made UK transplant.



DOCTOR WHO: THE WEB OF FEAR

SciFiNow Must see now!

The Doctor and the pit

Details PG // 150 mins // DVD · iTunes // Out now **Creators** Sydney Newman, Verity Lambert **Cast** Patrick Troughton, Frazer Hines, Deborah Watling, Nicholas Courtney, Jack Watling, Tina Packer, Ralph Watson **Distributor** 2entertain



Much is made of the reign of producer Philip Hinchcliff as *Doctor Who*'s 'Hammer era'. Recently recovered 1968 Second Doctor serial 'The Web Of Fear' ticks those boxes a decade earlier with its sophisticated tale of formless alien terrors prowling the London Underground.

The setup is pure *Quatermass*. There's a professor, Travers (Jack Watling, IRL father of companion star Deborah), reprising his role from 'The Abominable Snowman', sceptical army officer Captain Knight (Ralph Watson) with his gruff Northern second Staff Sgt Arnold (Jack Woolgar) and, of course, a strange power that brings London to its knees – the whispering Great Intelligence, perhaps the first villain after the Meddling Monk and the Celestial Toymaker to acknowledge the wider cosmic significance of the Doctor (the eternally wonderful Patrick Troughton). This is truly where your Cartmel Masterplan and long road to Trenzalore begins.

Shadows are deep and motives ambiguous. The long-running subplot about a traitor on the team, luring the Yeti to them, is genuinely nerve-rattling, while the creeping 'fungus' (played semi-convincingly by foam pouring down model tunnels) that's walling them in adds an element of the 'base under the siege' that the Troughton era excelled in. There's so much death and talk of death – corpses covered in ethereal cobwebs, soldiers dropping like flies, screams in the dark – that 'The Web Of Fear' is haunting in a way that *Doctor Who* would struggle to match after the rise of Mary Whitehouse.

Sadly, the third episode is still missing and cries out for the atmospheric animated recreation that 'The Moonbase' recently received. Instead, we're denied Brigadier – here a colonel – Lethbridge-Stewart (Nicholas Courtney)'s first appearance in full as he brings a cool efficiency that borders on the slightly threatening. Even knowing his illustrious future, there's something about his offhand manner and the suddenness of his arrival that forces you to consider whether he too could be the traitor. Masterful stuff from director Douglas Camfield.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Empty Child
Hug your legs close as Nine confronts a terrifying force that is haunting Blitz-stricken London.

WorldMags.net

TRIVIA THE NEXT APPEARANCE OF THE GREAT INTELLIGENCE IN *DOCTOR WHO* WAS THE 2012 CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 'THE SNOWMEN'.

WorldMags.net



Season One

DA VINCI'S DEMONS

The Dark Da Vinci rises... and falls

Details 15 // 480 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray · blinkbox // 31 March **Creator** David S Goyer **Cast** Tom Riley, Laura Haddock, Lara Pulver, Elliot Cowan, Ian Pirie, Eros Vlahos **Distributor** 2entertain



He's best known, of course, as the painter of the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper, but Leonardo da Vinci was so much more; he was a sculptor, architect, musician, scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, writer and quite possibly the greatest mind that has ever lived. But there's several thousand diary pages missing from a certain period of the polymath's life: his younger years.

It's this mysterious period that fascinates David S Goyer, co-writer of Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy and Zack Snyder's *Man Of Steel*, and now the showrunner of *Da Vinci's Demons*, a historical fantasy that explores what 'could' have happened rather than did. That means, against the backdrop of reality (such as political power struggles between Milan and Renaissance Florence), Goyer is able to depict da Vinci as being caught up with the Sons of Mithras, a religious cult that actually existed at the time, but of which there is no actual evidence he was involved with, and such figures as Vlad the Impaler, otherwise known as Count Dracula.

As is obvious, it's hardly a show that takes itself seriously. Young, cocky and swashbuckling, da Vinci (Tom Riley) is articulated through a tone that, once it gains momentum, owes a debt to energetic, dark-edged and thoroughly 'cool'-looking shows such as *Sherlock*, with Da Vinci's man-ahead-of-his-time thought processes visualised through slow-motion rotoscoped blueprints.

That momentum, however, only begins to reward the more persistent of viewers, with the first four episodes – half of the entire series – offering no more than a formulaic series of problems that da Vinci, being the arrogant arse he is, solves in his typically clever way. Once its arc of fantastical mysteries, political drama and dangerous love triangles develops, however, it begins to flow into something beyond a mere shadow of better shows; it gets creative, clever, confident and all the other words that you'd expect to associate with a show run by Goyer. It's just a shame that some might not give it enough of a chance to find out for themselves.

Stephen Kelly

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Casanova
Not as fantastical, but Russell T Davies' 2005 take on Casanova interprets his diaries in a similar style.



Season Three

LOST GIRL

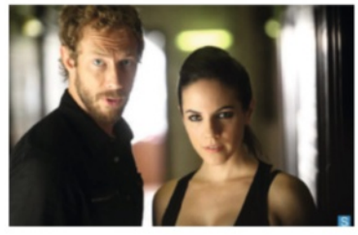
Not one to watch with your parents

Details 15 // 550 mins // 2013 // DVD · Blu-ray · iTunes · blinkbox · Demand 5 // Out now **Creator** Michelle Lovretta **Cast** Anna Silk, Ksenia Solo, Kris Holden-Ried, Zoie Palmer, Richard Howland, KC Collins **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



The princesses of promiscuity return for another season of fae flirtation and philandering. The Succubus that swings both ways is back to help rebuild the balance between the dark and the light, discover the truth about herself and maybe find a little love along the way.

Only a mere three weeks has elapsed since Lost Girl Bo (Anna Silk) was last seen, using blood trickery to help overpower the Garuda at the end of Season Two. The third season storms in with Bo on a wayward rampage through the city, robbing banks among other things. Unsure just how the dark is affecting her and which side she should be on, Bo finds herself needing to make some serious choices. The opening episode sees her arrested by her old bedtime buddy Dyson (Kris Holden-Ried) and thrown in jail. Of course, this is all a massive setup, as naturally Bo has a mystery to solve and as luck would have it, gets the opportunity to wear a revealing jailbird boiler suit.



Thankfully, the other central characters are given ample screen time and story arcs of their own. The delightfully curly Dyson has a new homicide partner, now that Hale (KC Collins) has been promoted to light fae leader, the Ash. The wonderfully wacky Kenzi (Ksenia Solo) continues to steal every scene she is in, and the comic relief she provides is a welcome respite from the endless pouty glares and smouldering sexual tension. Insufferable know-it-all Dr Lauren (Zoie Palmer) shows up round every corner (how dumb can the dark fae be?) as an 'undercover' plant, and also gets to have endless rumpy-pumpy with Bo, as they are now an official item.

There is much double crossing and body swapping to be found in this leather-clad series as Bo and co continue to encounter all manner of fae folk. If you can keep up with what they are, what side they're on, what they want and what they can do then you surely deserve a medal. On the other hand, any *Lost Girl* virgins will need to engage in a significant amount of homework to make sense of Bo's bonkers world.

Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Sanctuary
Dr Helen Magnus heads up a team of experts who investigate abnormal beings.

WorldMags.net

TRIVIA *DA VINCI'S DEMONS* IS A CO-PRODUCTION BETWEEN US NETWORK STARZ AND BBC WORLDWIDE, HENCE WHY RENAISSANCE FLORENCE WAS RECREATED IN SWANSEA.

WorldMags.net



YOUNG JUSTICE: LEGACY

What fresh hell is this?

Format PC//X360/PS3 // **Age rating** 12 // **Publisher** Warner Bros // **Developer** Little Orbit // **Players** 1-3 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £39.99 // **Downloadable** No



We can only assume that the DC universe has a version of Gumtree for superheroes. In fact, there's probably a listing that reads: 'Team wanted to occupy discrete mountain hideout. Furnished with trophy room and sparring area. Available now, cheap rent with some bills included. No pets, and no smokers are allowed in Mount Justice (sorry Constantine).' You see, after Warner Bros unceremoniously cancelled the rather wonderful *Young Justice* animated series, we feared their hideaway would stay empty forever. Now we wish it had, as tie-in game *Young Justice: Legacy* puts the final boot into the series while it's face-down on the ground. Honestly, we had almost forgotten that licensed tat like this even existed anymore.

Maybe we should praise developer Little Orbit. The studio found a way to surgically remove every entertaining characteristic of the Cartoon Network series and replace it with a trawl through bland, uninspired corridors, forcing you to desperately mash buttons in the blind hope that you might stumble across some semblance of entertainment. That's something, right?

Should you have been fortunate enough to play through the *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* games, you'll be familiar with the melee-centric combat on offer here, but *Legacy* fails to form any sort of satisfying feedback loop through the sluggish implementation of a simple combo system. What's worse is that *Legacy* looks like a game from another era entirely. It's ugly, and would certainly be in better company on the original Xbox than any of the other superhero-themed videogames to be released on the Xbox 360 in the last decade.

At times, *Legacy* threatens to be original – a squeeze of the left trigger will turn your face buttons into manifestations of your selected hero's power. Not that you'll ever really be able to enjoy the pleasures of digital superheroics, as the animation is so out of sync with everything around it that you'll likely be weeping tears of frustration before reaching the end.

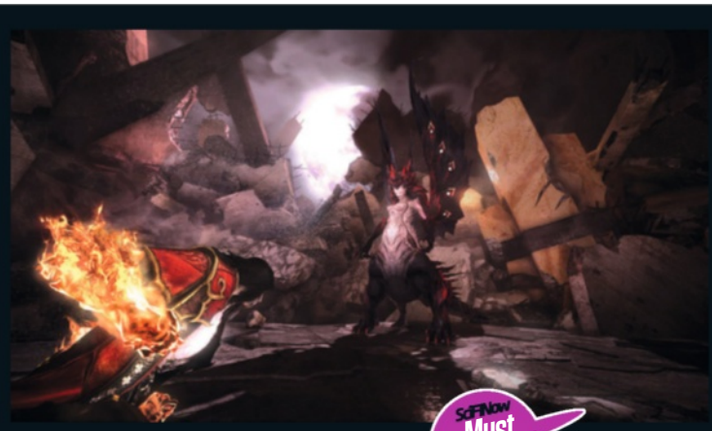
Legacy is impossible to recommend to anyone other than sadists. You see, it supports co-operative play between three 'friends', though let us tell you right now, controllers will be thrown in your direction at a speed that would make Kid Flash proud. *Legacy* is a stark reminder of a couple of things: that the *Young Justice* namesake will be forever dragged through the dirt from now on, and secondly, if you buy your kid this game they will probably hate DC forever. So unless you're a Marvel fan with an agenda, you have been warned.

Josh West
VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



LEGO Marvel Super Heroes
Charming, fun and with more characters than you can shake a Universe Handbook at.



SciFiNow Must play now!

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

Into the shadows

Format X360/PS3 // **Age rating** 18 // **Publisher** Konami // **Developer** Mercury Steam // **Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £39.99 // **Downloadable** No



Poor old Dracula, he has a serious case of the 'pity-mes'. It's a delicate state of mind and soul that you may exhibit after stirring from a 1,000-year nap, only to find your body frail, castle destroyed and ability to instil fear and loathing lost to the tales of time. *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2* takes everybody's favourite vampire, voiced here by Robert Carlyle, on a journey to find the sweet embrace of death. It sounds melodramatic, but the execution couldn't be further apart – *LOS2* is an incredibly entertaining and straight-up crazy adventure game that rarely fails to entertain.

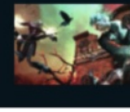
If you skipped over 2010's *Lords Of Shadow* or last year's handheld exclusive *Mirror Of Fate*, then worry not; *LOS2* takes its time establishing the world and its inhabitants. There's a lot of story to catch up on, but it takes you by the hand and guides you though some of the strangest vampire fan-fiction you'll encounter outside the darkest corners of the internet. By the time Patrick Stewart's character enters the fray you'll be wondering whether *LOS2* is being played for laughs or is unintentionally stout.

Either way, you're probably here to combo monsters into an early grave instead of debating the merits of a head-scratching narrative (though MercurySteam has succeeded in merging the two). The combat is deceptively simple; X can be mashed for a direct attack, while Y will have Dracula unleash a hellstorm of area-damage. Combos can be unlocked and upgraded, and you'll find yourself unlocking new weapons throughout. *LOS2* plays like a stripped-back iteration of *God Of War*, though it lacks the grandiose and outright violence of the PlayStation exclusive brawler. The combat is entertaining enough, albeit incredibly repetitive. We were spoiled last year with *DmC: Devil May Cry* and *God Of War: Ascension*, both of which managed to keep the combat sufficiently varied, while *LOS2* has a tendency to border on monotonous.

Time is *LOS2*'s greatest enemy. Not the terrible platforming sections, questionable voice acting or odd pacing; it's the core design that lags behind the rest of the industry. Were this released a year after its predecessor, it would dazzle with its beautiful graphics and zany nature, but now it just feels lost between generations. That said, if you're after a lengthy game to sink your teeth into (ha) there's nothing quite like *LOS2* right now. It's not for everyone, but if you're looking for a little bit of insanity and blood-lust in your vampire fiction, you've come to the right place.

Josh West
VERDICT ★★★★☆

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toyhq.co.uk // £24.99

BEST FOR: THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

1 EVIL SUPERMAN FIGURE

For fans of the darker side of Superman, this collectable will save the day. It's based on the image of the late and legendary Christopher Reeve, as seen in *Superman III*, in which the kind-hearted hero succumbed to synthetic kryptonite. The 30cm-tall model is highly authentic, from the realistic facial features to the movie-accurate costume. He comes with three interchangeable palms for relaxing, fighting and fisticuffs, as well as a rocky ground figure stage for pulling some mean poses.

toyhq.co.uk // £125

BEST FOR: SUPER FANS

3 CHUCKY DOLL

Get your own 'friend to the end' with this ten-inch Chucky doll. Knowing he's possessed by the serial killer known as 'the Lakeshore Strangler', you might be tempted to leave him in his box. We were brave enough to take a closer look, and couldn't help admiring the tattered remains of his 'Good Guys' clothing. This doll is definitely dressed to kill.

toyhq.co.uk // £19.99

BEST FOR: OVER 18S

4 MICHAEL KEATON'S BATMAN

There's no mistaking the pursed lips; it's Michael Keaton's Bruce Wayne from the 1989 movie *Batman*, and the likeness is uncanny. This highly detailed model of Gotham's saviour is available from Toy HQ, and comes complete with utility belt, grapple-gun, batarang and interchangeable hands. There's over 20 points of articulation so that you can pose this 18-inch figure just the way you want, and includes a real fabric cape.

toyhq.co.uk // £79.99

BEST FOR: DARK KNIGHT COLLECTORS

5 ELECTRONIC TALKING ROBOCOP

The recent reboot wasn't as mechanical as some feared, but this limited edition Enforcement Droid 209 Series reminds us why the 1987 original will always come out on top. The ED-209 is fully poseable, with a pop-out rocket launcher, hinged arm wings and cannon arms, as well as sound effects and dialogue: "Warning, throw down your weapon. You have 15 seconds to comply."

toyhq.co.uk // £64.99

BEST FOR: LAW GIVERS

6 ICED BISCUITS FROM THE MAPLE CAKERY

Putting the icing on the cake of every occasion, The Maple Cakery caters for the geek in all of us. Hand-made by self-confessed Whovian Sally, these vanilla biscuits are topped with royal icing and decorated to look like your favourite superheroes or themed like your best-loved show. Based in Wallasey, Wirral, it also makes cakes, macarons and marshmallow.

themaplecakery.co.uk // £18 for ten

BEST FOR: GEEKS WITH A SWEET TOOTH

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DEAD PANIC

Publisher: Fireside Games // **Players:** 1-6 // **RRP:** £34.99

With *The Walking Dead* remaining so popular, it's little wonder that board game developers continue to release games based around zombies. *Dead Panic* is one of the better ones we've played recently, heavily relying on co-operative play and being a lot of fun in the process.

Holed up in an old hunting cabin, you must work together with a team of people, ranging from police officers to priests, in order to survive the incoming waves of zombies. Survivors occasionally turn up and need saving, as they'll hopefully have the precious pieces of broken radio you need to call for help. Assemble all three pieces, and you can hail a van and escape; fail, and you'll become zombie chow, and in turn be forced to prey upon your still-living friends.

Play is divided between the players and zombies. Each player can take two base actions that range from moving, drawing or using 'Cabin Cards' to repairing damaged walls, trading items or performing van and radio actions. Classes have additional skills, so Julie the delivery driver can draw two cards and give one to another player, while Father Michael the priest gives up an action for another player to immediately use. Cabin Cards feature useful items, from fire axes to elephant guns, that can greatly increase your chances of survival, making them extremely useful.

Once players have taken their turns, an 'Event Card' is drawn that will typically result in the spawning of more zombies or controlling the ones already in play. Zombies are then moved, and will fight any players in the same space as them. There are five different zombie



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types, all of which behave differently: Brutes will effortlessly bust through walls and have high damage, while Sprinters move twice as fast as normal undead. Zombies will always target the player with the 'Bait Token', which gets passed around at the end of each turn.

When zombies are spawned, survivors will sometimes appear, and will immediately head to the cabin. If they make it they'll drop off a radio piece, otherwise the piece falls where it dies, meaning players will have to risk leaving the relative safety of the cabin, creating an interesting risk-and-reward mechanic.

As with many co-operative games, the odds are stacked against you, particularly when fallen players start rising, but that makes winning all the more satisfying. Some of the rules are a bit clunky, and the use of dice creates a few unwelcome elements when resolving zombie movement and combat, but it is an otherwise entertaining game that captures the spirit of schlocky zombie films.

BEST FOR: FANS OF CO-OP GAMES



TOP FIVE

MAGIC: THE GATHERING BORN OF THE GODS



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2. KIORA, THE CRASHING WAVE £19



3. XENAGOS, GOD OF REVELS £16



4. MOGIS, GOD OF SLAUGHTER £15



5. PHENAX, GOD OF DECEPTION £10

Ricochet Robots

Publisher: Z-Man Games // **Players:** 1+ // **RRP:** £34.99



This mind-bending effort from Alex Randolph is as much a puzzle game as it is a board game. The idea of *Ricochet Robots* is to reach a target chip with the correctly coloured robot in as few moves as possible. Robots move horizontally and vertically and have no brakes, so they keep going in a straight line until they hit a wall or another robot. There are additional obstacles on the game board that can hinder progress, and robots must always ricochet (change direction 90 degrees) once after a move for that move to be valid. After the board has been set up, players must try to work out the correct and quickest route before everyone else. Once a player has made a bid, others then have an additional minute to outbid them. Players then take it in turns (starting with the lowest bidder) to try and reach the chip in their agreed number of moves, with play continuing until someone achieves their target. Once the chip has been captured the game starts afresh until someone has scored the required number of points. The actual board is split into four pieces and is double-sided, which creates 1,536 different solutions, meaning *Ricochet Robots* offers plenty of longevity. It's a stimulating game, but one that is more suited to strategists.

BEST FOR: DEEP THINKERS

The Hobbit: The Desolation Of Smaug

Publisher: Cryptozoic // **Players:** 1-4 // **RRP:** £32.99



The second part of Cryptozoic's *The Hobbit* trilogy is lighter and breezier than the movie. While it's designed to be played with *An Unexpected Journey*, it's perfectly playable on its own.

Play takes place across two game boards: one featuring Mirkwood, and the other depicting Lake-Town and the Lonely Mountain. Players must systematically cross off each card/quest on the first board by rolling four dice and matching the symbols shown. Succeed, and they move onto the next leg of the quest, fail and they lose one of six resource cards that will help them in the final fight.

Characters have special abilities that can influence the board, while 'Event' cards can make your journey even more hazardous. Successfully clear Mirkwood, and you move onto the final board, which features the 'Dragon Track'. Failing one of the board's tougher challenges will result in Smaug moving; fail seven times and it's game over. What's neat here, though, is the ability to move Smaug back by rolling the required icons.

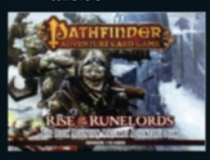
While there's little here for seasoned gamers, younger players should enjoy the light challenge that *The Desolation Of Smaug* presents.

BEST FOR: YOUNGER GAMERS

Expansion Of The Month

PATHFINDER ADVENTURE CARD GAME: THE HOOK MOUNTAIN MASSACRE

Publisher: Paizo Publishing // **Players:** 1-6
RRP: £16.99



This pricey but gorgeous expansion pack introduces a host of great features. The biggest change is the addition of toxic zombies that deal damage to any heroes in the same zone as them. Also new are the Zombivors, tanks that take more hits than normal survivors, but have less actions and are slower. There's even a game mode called 'Ultrared Mode' that lets survivors earn more experience points and use better weapons, although there are more dangerous foes as a result. Add a selection of new survivors and ten more missions, and it becomes an essential expansion.

Do You Remember?

MAGIC: THE GATHERING MIRAGE BLOCK

Magic meets the Dark Continent



There have been plenty of great *Magic: The Gathering* expansion packs, but *Mirage* is one of our favourites. Like the current *Theros* block, it's incredibly rich in theme, being heavily based on African lore. It was also notable for a number of memorable game mechanics: 'Charms' gave the player a choice of three effects, 'Flanking' creatures gave -1/-1 penalties to creatures blocking them, while cards with phasing left play if certain conditions were met. The block consisted of three sets: Mirage, Visions and Weatherlight, with the latter being particularly noticeable, as it was the first to feature a fully contained story.

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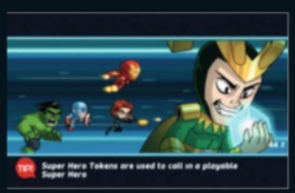
Our pick of the best this month

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PRICE: IOS/ANDROID

1 What do Earth's Mightiest Heroes get up to in between multi-billion dollar movies? Star in an endless runner game and battle supervillains for your entertainment. The end goal is to find fan favourite Loki, who looks incredibly cute in his cartoon form. Along the way you'll run into disks that transform you into different superheroes and enable you to use their abilities to dodge obstacles and go the distance.

BEST FOR: WORLD-SAVING





ZOMBIE SHOT: COLOSSEUM

FOR: FREE
PRICE: IOS

2 In this pixelated post-apocalyptic world the zombie threat has been obliterated, but humans are using the cadavers for entertainment. They release them into an arena, and you must shoot them before they get too close. There are different weapons to choose from, with the option to unlock more, and you can hire other zombie-killing characters. It's a novel spin on a rotting corpse.

BEST FOR: ARCADE ADDICTS





IN FEAR I TRUST

FOR: £1.99/£2.99
PRICE: IOS

3 You're trapped in a facility and subject to deadly experiments. You don't know how you got there, but the pages of notes and other clues will let you piece together events. There are puzzles to solve and locations that look straight out of *American Horror Story*. Navigate using the virtual joysticks or tap to move, spurred on by the intrigue of where things are going. Dark visuals and disturbing sounds will have you gripping your device with sweaty palms.

BEST FOR: BRAVE SOULS



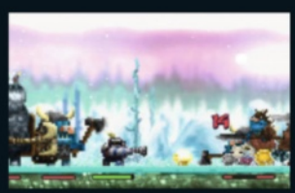


LOOT HERO

FOR: £0.69/$0.99
PRICE: IOS/ANDROID

4 Travel through five worlds to slay the dragon that's setting towns ablaze. Its magic power resurrects evil creatures for you to kill and steal their loot, spearing multiple baddies at a time with your lance. At the end of every land you'll meet a unique boss, and once the dragon is slain you can graduate to the next level. But that means going back and doing it all again, only this time the difficulty level is increased. With the potential for infinite gameplay, this is an app that offers good value for money.

BEST FOR: DRAGON SLAYERS





ROBOCOP

FOR: FREE
PRICE: IOS/ANDROID

5 Based on the solid reboot of the Eighties classic, the *RoboCop* app could be the next arcade classic. It's in the same vein as *Time Crisis*, where you play as the metal law enforcer and blast your way to the next point of cover. It's framed as a training session, and you must save human hostages, capture informants and battle cyborg enemies. The surroundings are a bit samey and the in-app purchases are bothersome, but it's easy to pick up.

BEST FOR: TRIGGER-HAPPY GAMERS





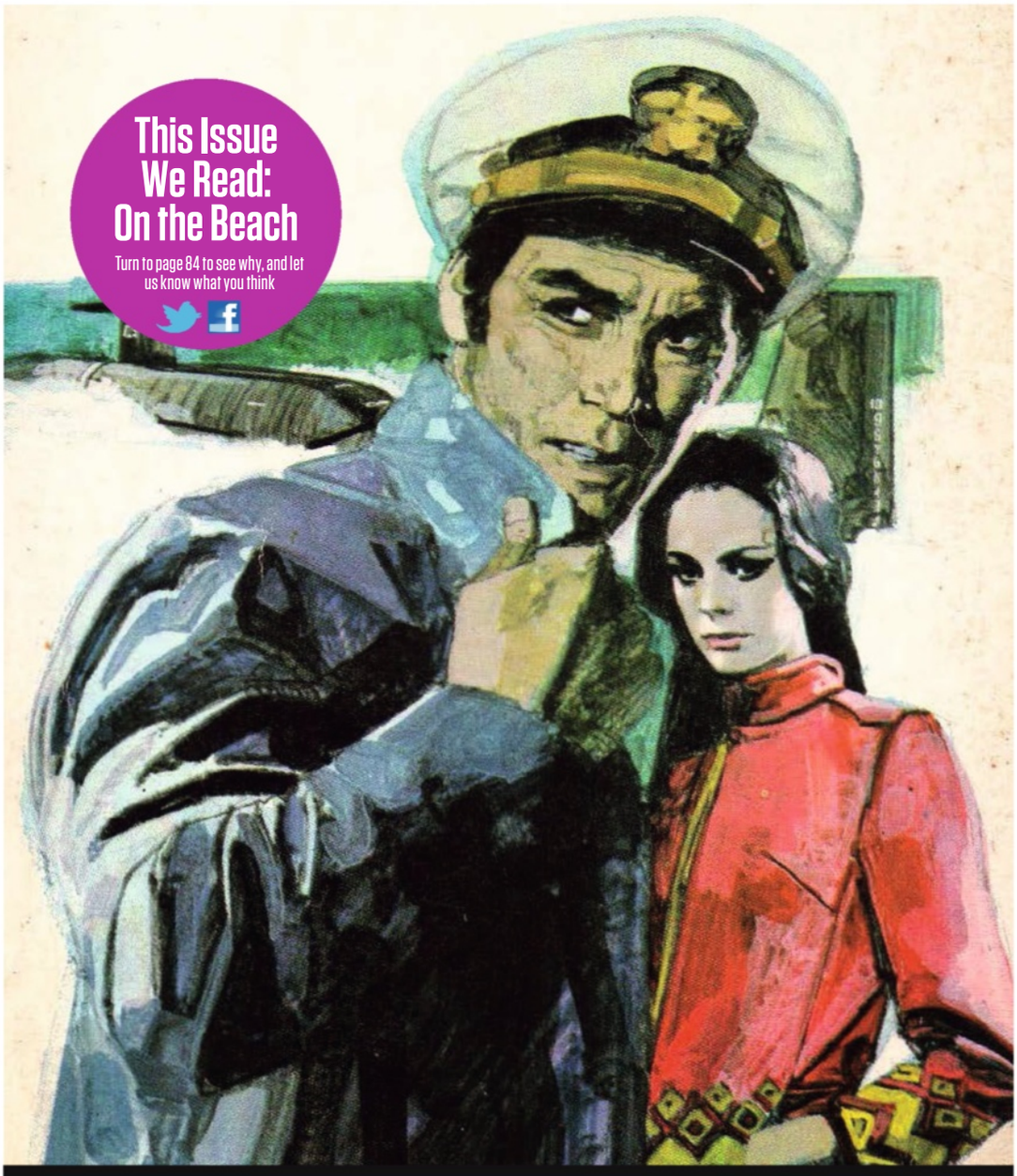
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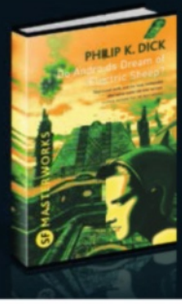
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This Issue We Read: On the Beach

Turn to page 84 to see why, and let us know what you think

Next We'll Be Reading: Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?



1 Pick up *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* By Philip K Dick, the hard-boiled sci-fi noir that pondered themes of identity and more.

2 Follow SciFiNow on Twitter. Read and share your thoughts with the hashtag #BookClub; they might make it into the magazine!

3 You can contribute to the Book Club discussions as much or as little as you like; the most important thing is that you have fun.

4 Pick up issue 93 of SciFiNow to check out what we thought and learn about the history of the book and its author with our Essential Read.

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How she reinvented Captain Marvel.

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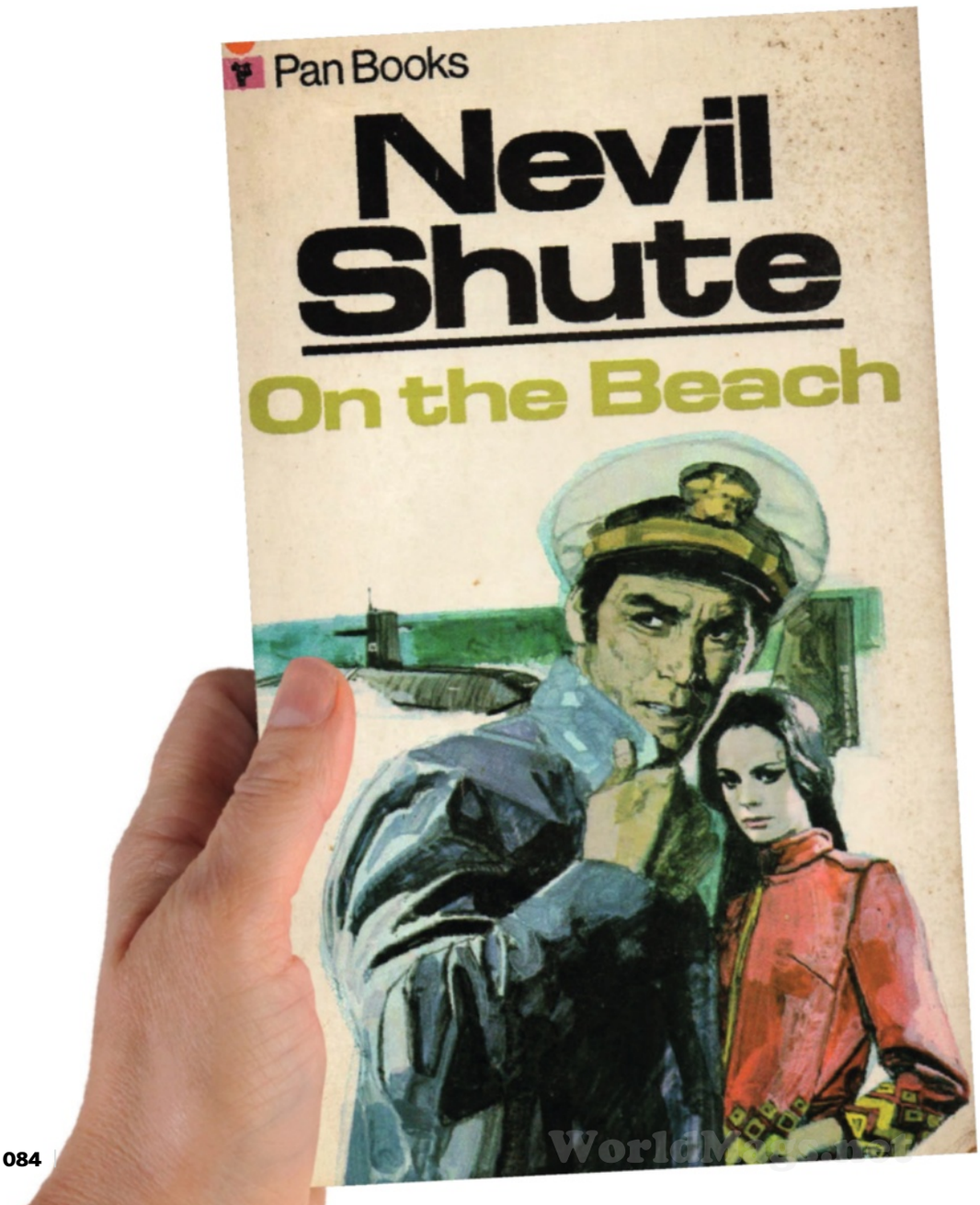
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WORDS
MATTHEW
HANDRAHAN

ESSENTIAL READ: ON THE BEACH

NEVIL SHUTE WAS BORN AT A TIME WHEN WAR WAS ROMANTIC, BUT HE LIVED TO SEE IT THREATEN THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE HUMAN RACE. IT WAS TIME TO SHEATH THE SWORD AND REACH FOR A PEN…





Over the course of the tumultuous 20th Century, the mushroom cloud became an iconic symbol for the very worst human tendencies. It was the unthinkable act that marked the end of six years of death and destruction, and an extreme but logical culmination of so much madness and loss. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the revelation of nuclear warfare's unspeakable potential, and they cast a long shadow over the ensuing decades. World powers found themselves bound by a mutual fear of cataclysmic escalation, fingers never far from the button that could set the dominoes falling. The atmosphere was heavy with paranoia, as thick and choking as nuclear winter.

But times of great crisis tend to produce great art, and the nuclear calamity about to befall the world in the Fifties and Sixties was fertile ground indeed. Once we had seen the means by which humanity could be destroyed, it was only natural that we conceive of how people might respond in the aftermath, and how society might survive in the years that followed. Fiction that deals with a nuclear apocalypse and whatever comes after is now so prevalent that it's virtually a genre in its own right, but there was a time when such ideas still had the power to shock. And in that time, no book resonated as much as Nevil Shute's *On The Beach*.

SYNOPSIS



World War III was as swift and catastrophic as people had feared. A nuclear attack on Italy led to one on the Soviet Union, and more followed until everything in the northern hemisphere was gone. Everything except the fallout, which is silently adrift on the breeze, floating toward the parts of the Earth the bombs could not reach. Places like Australia. Places like Melbourne.

And what should a person do when the wind's poisonous currents are delivering slow death? For Commander Dwight Towers, there's a mysterious Morse code message to trace and decipher. For Peter Holmes, there's the safety and security of his family. For John Osborne, there's the racing car in his garage, crying out for restoration. All are distractions to pass the time, as the fallout draws closer and options run out. When the end is assured, the only choice that remains is how you choose to meet it.

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USS Seawolf, the USA's second nuclear submarine, was launched two years before *On The Beach* was released.

Nevil Shute Norway – he dropped the 'Norway' for his nom de plume – was born in London on January 1899, the precipice of Britain's decline after a century of international dominance. Great Britain was a global leader in virtually every field, and loudly expressed national pride was practically expected of its citizens. Wars were a fact of life, a necessary aspect of growing and maintaining such a vast empire, but there was still a strident belief in the honour of fighting for your country. The military rarely had trouble finding soldiers, which was just as well, because by 1914 it would need every last man it had.

The huge losses of World War I were perhaps the single most important blow dealt to the romantic ideal of going to war. Armoured tanks and poison gas had ensured that tens of thousands had perished not on the field of battle, but cowering in fear, and those that had tried to cross the forsaken ground between the opposing trenches had been filleted by machine-gun fire. Shute's brother Fred, a brilliant classical scholar, had gone to Flanders of his own free will, full of excitement and ready to serve. Within weeks, he was in a makeshift hospital in France, dying from wounds sustained in a mortar blast. The death of Fred, and the abrupt annihilation of all his spirit and potential, stayed with Shute for the rest of his days.

"I HAD LIVED IN A WORLD THAT WAS GROWING STEADILY BLEAKER AND GRIMMER" NEVIL SHUTE

"For the remainder of my time at Shrewsbury, I don't think I had the slightest interest in a career or any adult life; I was born to one end, which was to go into the army and do the best I could before getting killed," Shute later wrote in *Slide Rule*, the first volume of his memoirs.

"For four years of my adolescence I had lived in a world that was growing steadily bleaker and grimmer, and in that four years I had grown to accept the fact that in a very short time I should probably be dead. I cannot remember any particular resentment at this prospect; indeed, in some ways it was even stimulating. It has puzzled many people to imagine how the Japanese produced their kamikazes or suicide pilots in the last war. It has never been much of a puzzle to me, however; in 1918, anybody could have made a kamikaze out of me."

However, despite his best efforts – and those of his parents, who were just as keen that their remaining son be given the chance to go and fight for Blighty – Shute never got near the frontline, leaving him free to pursue his driving passion: engineering. While his father was a published author of "rather dry books" and he was clearly aware that he had a knack for prose, it would take another 30 years before Shute finally allowed writing to take precedence over his love for machines, and aeroplanes in particular. Crafting poems, short stories and novels was simply an enjoyable way to spend his evenings while he built his fortune as an aircraft engineer – he was the co-owner of a successful company called 'Airspeed' – during the day. Writing played second fiddle when his books didn't sell, and it stayed that way even when they did.

Looking back over Shute's life, a handful of key experiences stand out as essential to the man he became, the death of his beloved brother being the first. The second was his time working on the R100, a hugely ambitious airship that

5 Reasons to read... On The Beach

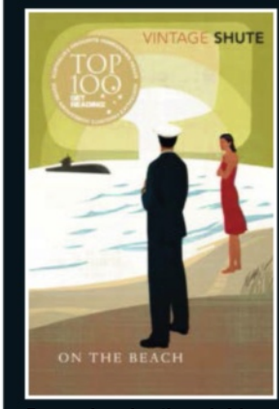
1 Because you can, and that hasn't always been the case. Nevil Shute was one of the most popular authors of his time, selling millions of books over many years. Yet his work fell out of print, and remained so until Vintage Classics reissued part of his catalogue in 2009.

2 He's one of ours. Shute turned his back on life in the United Kingdom in the Fifties, mainly for political reasons, and chose Australia as his new home. He is now widely assumed to be an Australian author, despite living in Britain for more than half of his life.

3 He understands the tools of destruction. Shute spent a decent chunk of World War II inventing unconventional weapons for the British government; not working with atomic bombs, mind you, but close enough to inspire the dread of *On The Beach*.

4 They don't write them like this anymore. In a very real sense, *On The Beach* embodies the values of a bygone age, its characters restrained and dignified even in the face of absolute despair. Our modern disposition is altogether more histrionic.

5 It changed the world for the better. *On The Beach* was published at a time when people were ignorant about the real effects of nuclear war, and its popularity became a key force in raising awareness of its dangers.



Few novels explore the end of days as evocatively as *On The Beach*.

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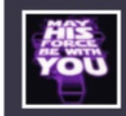
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Issue 93's Essential Read: Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?

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Your Take On The Classic

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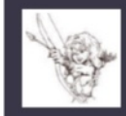
"I read that book my senior year of high school for my English class. I loved it! #BookClub" **@ThatNerdyFLGirl**



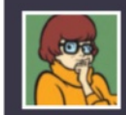
"Very good, but of its time. #BookClub" **@johnlambshead**



"Loved it. Very classic story telling. It is a product of its time and may be slow-paced for some. But well written. #BookClub" **@MoscatiVision**



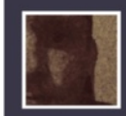
"Very good, but dated. Very much the 'Stiff upper lip and brandy in the face of doom, old stick.' #BookClub" **@hierath77**



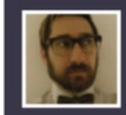
"Great book, very much a product of its time but engrossing and quite emotional. Lots of very pertinent 'what ifs' raised #BookClub" **@BeingBetteDavis**



"Wow, yes, a while ago at school. Found it quite boring at the time, but that was then... #BookClub" **@wordsrmagic2me**

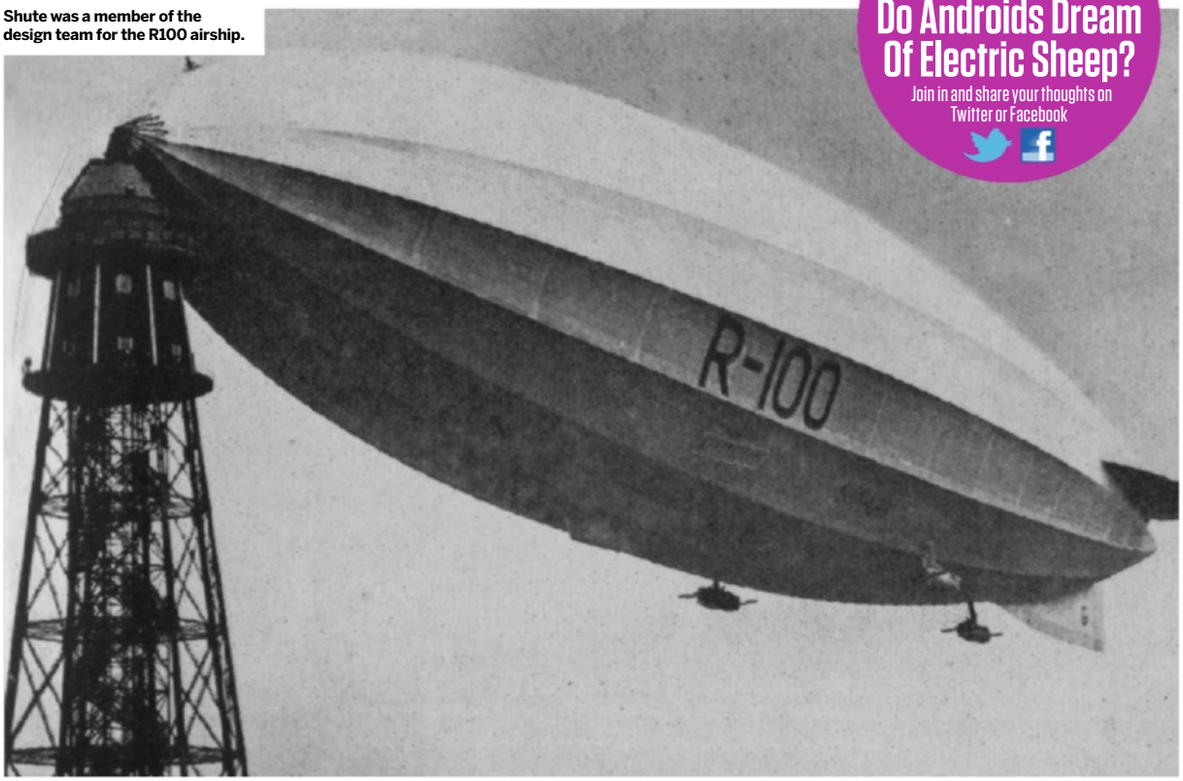


"Love it. The sense of dread is palpable. The sense of loneliness, of an empty and shrinking world even more so. #BookClub" **@whysospurious**



"It made me cry on a plane, travelling to a conference where I would be away from my kids for a few days. #BookClub" **@utopianimpulse**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Shute was a member of the design team for the R100 airship.

became the first to make a return crossing of the Atlantic. Shute was a key figure on the R100's design team, and he was on board when she made her successful round-trip to Montreal in Canada.

It would have been a formative period anyway, but the R100's triumph was bittersweet. The ship was built at Vickers, a famous private engineering company, but it was at the behest of the government, who were also funding an identical ship, the R101, which was being designed and assembled at the British Air Ministry. Essentially, it was an A/B test in which the relative efficacy and quality of the private and public sectors would be assessed and compared – a common occurrence in Britain at the time, where a great many industries were entirely in the public sector.

For reasons too detailed to explain here, the R101's attempt to reach India ended in tragedy. The privately built R100's success had intensified the rivalry with the Air Ministry, and so the final stages of the production were rushed to meet its scheduled deadline, which had already been brought forward to suit Lord Thomson of Cardington, a dignitary who was riding on board. In *Slide Rule*, Shute complained that the R101 became "the plaything of a politician," resulting in a lack of care that ultimately cost the lives of all but six of its passengers – 48 people dead through what in Shute's opinion amounted to little more than egotism and incompetence. It would taint his view of politics, politicians and society in general from that moment on.

> **"A POLITICIAN OR A CIVIL SERVANT IS STILL TO ME AN ARROGANT FOOL UNTIL PROVED OTHERWISE"** NEVIL SHUTE

"I considered at the time that the disaster was caused by the actions of the men at [RAF Cardington, site of the Royal Airship Works]; I do not think that now," Shute noted in *Slide Rule*. The responsibility lay with those giving the orders. "Either these men at the Air Ministry were extraordinarily stupid, which I do not believe, or they appreciated that quite abnormal and unjustifiable risks were being taken with R101. If the latter be true, then they failed to speak up against Lord Thomson because they were afraid.

"A man's own experiences determine his opinions, of necessity. I was 31-years old at the time of the R101 disaster, and my first close contact with senior civil servants and politicians at work was in the field of airships, where I watched them produce disaster. That experience still colours much of my thinking. I am very willing to recognise the good in many men of these two classes, but a politician or a civil servant is still to me an arrogant fool until proved otherwise."

The third turning point arrived as the world sank back into a state of war. In 1939, Shute was the co-owner of a very successful aeroplane manufacturer and a published author enjoying greater returns with every new book. Life was good, to put it mildly, but Shute was not the sort to sit on the sidelines while his country fought against the malign force sweeping across Europe. He joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a sub-lieutenant, but the government was far from ignorant about his engineering prowess, and within a few days of the start of training he was called upon to join an experimental new division, the Directorate of Miscellaneous Weapons.

Fundamentally, Shute became to the British army what Q is to James Bond, living out the war in an office concocting every more ingenious ways to help the Allies and defeat the Nazis. He developed an acoustic device that allowed ships to detect approaching planes, a 'rocket spear' that helped those ships defend themselves against submarines, and a portable still to provide soldiers with fresh water during operations in the desert. On occasion, he participated in a grand folly, most famously a huge device similar to a Catherine Wheel called the 'Great Panjandrum', which was intended to smash the Nazis' Atlantic Wall through sheer force and intimidating spectacle, but ultimately just caused panic and embarrassment on a rain-drenched beach in Devon.

WorldMags.net

Shute was clearly proud of his somewhat unconventional contribution to the war effort, but the scale of the imminent slaughter was not lost on him, either. The weapons he created were for a war on an unprecedented scale, larger even than that which took the life of his brother and so many others he knew as a child. Would that looming sacrifice mean more now, even with a more clearly defined enemy to fight and suppress? On the eve of the D-Day invasion, which turned the tide of the war, Shute certainly had room for doubt: "We engineers are apt to lie awake these days wondering whether in our old age, if we survive to see it, we shall regret these years of work upon the weapons that have made a desperate adventure possible."

Shute left Britain for good in 1949, disillusioned with rising taxes and the establishment of the welfare state. Bitter experience had illustrated the inadequacies of the public sector and the collateral damage that its citizens were expected to tolerate, and so Shute resettled his family in Australia, a country with no great desire for global dominance, and one where private interests and enterprise were allowed to thrive.

It was in Melbourne, secure in the fortunes that he had built through years of hard work, that Shute wrote *On The Beach*, a painful examination of the final days of ordinary people in the aftermath of a nuclear war. It had no last-minute reprieves or heroic attempts to avert disaster; just the terrible, creeping realisation that certain death was inching ever closer to Australian shores – the fallout of a war they know little about, fought by foreign governments with exotic weapons of unimaginable power. The only remaining choice is how to face the end.

Shute died in 1960, less than three years after *On The Beach* was published. He would live to see it achieve popular success, but would never realise how important his quiet, restrained tale became to instilling a widespread fear of that mushroom cloud, and the terrible things for which it stood. Shute was the first mainstream writer to tackle the subject of armageddon, and he did so without compromise, through the eyes of normal people. *On The Beach* became a key text in changing the common perception of nuclear armament, draining what little glory and empowerment remained in the concept of war. In a time when a single push of a button can mean the end of everything, there can be no such thing as a heroic death.

The first edition of *On The Beach* opened with an epigraph, hand-picked by Shute, from TS Eliot's *The Hollow Men*: "This is the way the world ends... Not with a bang, but a whimper."

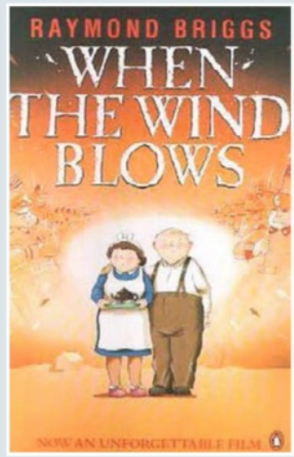
Where Have I Seen This Before?

BEYOND THE APOCALYPSE

FALLOUT

Few works in any medium have so effectively played the apocalypse for laughs. Indeed, Interplay's classic RPG series is the only work on this list that does so with a sense of humour, so if you're looking for a bit of fun with your nuclear annihilation, you're unlikely to find it anywhere else. Bethesda's games, *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas*, offer particularly cutting satire on our twisted flirtation with destruction.



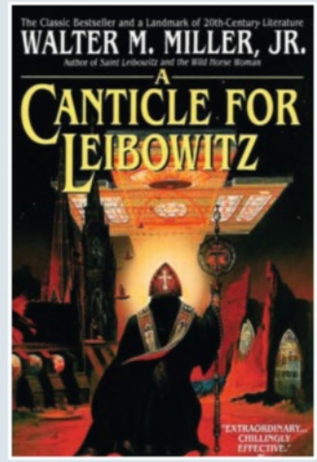


WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

How many childhoods did Raymond Briggs scar with this shattering work? The author of classics like *The Snowman* and *Fungus The Bogeyman* had a huge and fiercely loyal audience, popular among adults and even more so among kids. But don't let When The Wind Blows' warm, homely art style fool you; its conclusion echoes the quiet desperation of *On The Beach*, and is no less powerful.

A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ

Walter M Miller's classic novel has a wider lens than *On The Beach*, spanning thousands of years and several ages of the humanity's development. In fact, *A Canticle For Leibowitz* starts 600 years after the global nuclear war that decimated life on Earth, Miller being more concerned about avoiding a second cataclysm than surviving the first.





ON THE BEACH

The novel's reputation can be seen as a direct result of the popularity of Stanley Kramer's 1959 film adaptation. While Shute was no great fan, it's actually rather good, being effective in its evocation of the text and buoyed by Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner. More to the point, it helped *On The Beach* become one of the defining novels of the nuclear age.

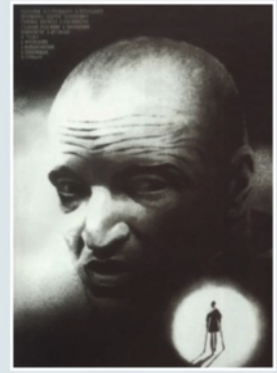


THE ROAD

Cormac McCarthy's vision of the end of humanity is more brutal than Shute's, filled as it is with filth, gore, murder and perversion. While McCarthy doesn't flinch from the darkness, he allows his story to close with a glimmer of hope that something good might survive. Shute may have a more genteel voice, but he offers no such comfort.

STALKER

While this 1979 masterpiece from Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky doesn't literally tackle nuclear war or its aftermath, it is drenched in Cold War paranoia and images of barren, lifeless wastelands. Loosely based on the novella *Roadside Picnic* and with a script from its authors, *Stalker* is perhaps the finest work of post-apocalyptic cinema.



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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ROBIN JARVIS

Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Where to start with one of Britain's greatest living children's authors

It's a well-known fact that great books for younger readers should not talk down or condescend to their audience, and Robin Jarvis is a terrific example of an author who does not underestimate his readers' imaginations. Since the publication of *The Dark Portal* in 1989, Jarvis has been creating dark, rich and terrifying worlds that blend mythology, folklore, classic children's literature archetypes and his own unique touch. *The Deptford Mice* trilogy is arguably his best known, but his *Tales From The Wyrd Museum* and *The Whitby Witches* trilogies also inspired legions of passionate readers.

Jarvis began his career as a visual storyteller, and it was his sketches of his neighbourhood in Deptford and its rodent inhabitants that paved the way for his first trilogy. The anthropomorphised animals that he uses to tell his story belie the darkness and horror that make the story so compulsively readable.

Jarvis has often said that he does not consider himself a horror author. This may well be the case, but his novels are often deeply scary. The *Wyrd Museum* trilogy is as packed with unsettling elements as its setting, with warped Christianity, Norse mythology and an American GI trapped inside a teddy bear coming together to create a rich tapestry.

> **"HIS NOVELS HAVE PROVIDED READERS WITH DARK DELIGHTS"**

There's more than just horror, however. Jarvis' worlds have their own rich histories and societies, perhaps best demonstrated in the mysterious bats and psychic rats of *The Deptford Mice*, not to mention the horrifying force that is Jupiter in prequel trilogy *The Deptford Histories*, which created a background every bit as horrifying and heartbreaking as its predecessor.

Jarvis understands that a great children's book should be challenging and introduce adult themes. From love and death to horror and mythology, his novels have provided generations of readers with dark delights. With *The Deptford Mice* and *The Whitby Witches* currently out of print, it's high time to pay tribute to this fantastic author.

Magic England

FIVE DESTINATIONS TO ADVENTURE IN



Alderley Edge

Alan Garner's childhood home becomes the setting for his extraordinary *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*. The ancient powers beneath the magical spot rise to claim the titular artefact, and the Morrigan is unforgettable.



Oxford

After establishing his fantasy world of witches and daemons, Philip Pullman took the reader back to 'reality' and Oxford in *The Subtle Knife* when he introduced Will Parry, who finds a window to Lyra Silvertongue's world.



York

Susanna Clarke begins her magical epic in York, where headstrong magician Mr Norrell is determined to make a name for himself in an England that has forgotten his trade. Making the statues of York Cathedral talk is a good start.



London

Young Zanna and Deeba discover a world beneath their London in China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun*, where inanimate objects come alive and a prophesied 'Shwazzy' will deliver its inhabitants from the poisonous smog of pollution.



Cornwall

Ignore the terrible film, Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* sequence is a classic of children's fantasy, in which the Drew siblings discover an ancient battle between Light and Dark while they are on holiday in Cornwall.

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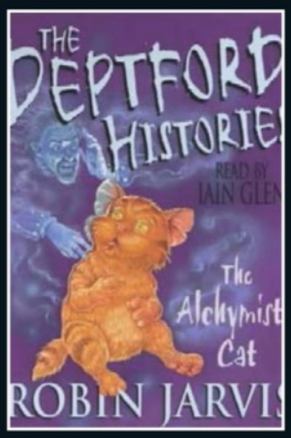


Jarvis' characters are often teenagers or young children who are thrust into a supernatural world, like Jennifer Connelly's Sarah in *Labyrinth*.

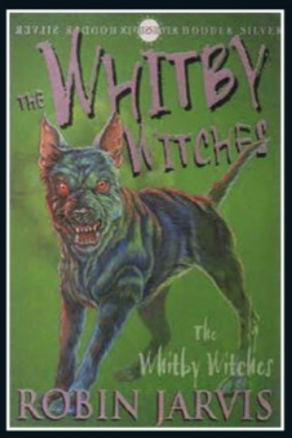


It's not surprising that Jim Henson was set to make a film of *The Deptford Mice* at one point, given its similarity to *The Dark Crystal*.











Opening the door

The Deptford Mice trilogy begins

THE DARK PORTAL
Publisher: Acorn Independent Press
Published: 1989
Price: £3.99 (Kindle)

Jarvis' career began with *The Deptford Mice* trilogy, the story of a group of mice who uncover a growing evil in the sewers. Jarvis skilfully weaves a mythology for both the mice and the subterranean rats, drawing on English folklore and traditions, with the Black Death the means by which darkness will conquer the world. The story continues in *The Crystal Prison* and *The Final Reckoning*, and as the malevolent Jupiter breaks free there's a real sense of danger and terror.

"*The Dark Portal* was so dark and tense, considering it was aimed at a young audience. #BookClub" **@tamcgarrigan**

Ancient histories

Old familiar fiend

THE ALCHEMIST'S CAT
Publisher: Simon & Schuster
Published: 1993
Price: £5.99

Following *The Deptford Mice*, Jarvis decided to develop the rich history he hinted at with a prequel trilogy. *The Oaken Throne* plays the relationship between squirrels and bats as a *Romeo & Juliet* tale, and *Thomas* is the life story of *The Deptford Mice*'s heroic Thomas Triton, but this first novel shows how the evil Jupiter came to be, as the runt of the litter grows jealous of the alchemist's familiar. Jarvis continues to mine tragedy out of hate that festers until it becomes murderous.

"*The Deptford Mice* series were my favourites... It really used to freak me out!#BookClub" **@Danburden1138**

The Wyrd trilogy

An ancient museum keeps terrifying secrets

THE WOVEN PATH
Publisher: Harper Collins
Published: 1995
Price: £6.99

The *Tales From The Wyrd Museum* trilogy provides Jarvis with a wonderful setting in the form of the titular museum. When 11-year-old Neil Chapman comes to live there, he discovers objects of horrifying mythological power that are starting to wake up. *The Woven Path* sees Neil fall through a portal into Blitz-torn London; and book two, *The Raven's Knot*, features murderous ravens and an insane priest. Jarvis once again uses English folklore, blended with Norse mythology and wonderful touches of his own.

"I absolutely loved the hell out of that series. Nice and dark, though not as scary as *Deptford Mice*! #BookClub" **@EwaSR**

The Whitby Series

We do like to be beside the sea

THE WHITBY WITCHES
Publisher: Hodder Children's Books
Published: 1991
Price: £6.99

Young Jennet and Ben are sent from foster home to foster home until they are taken in by the mysterious but kindly Alice Boston in Whitby. Alice takes to the siblings quickly, despite Ben's claims that he can see the dead. It soon becomes apparent that Alice has supernatural gifts of her own, as she and her friends unearth a horrifying ancient threat to the town and its spell-casting community. Jarvis makes great use of the legendary spooky seaside setting, delivering his own spin on certain myths.

"I forgot all about that author. As a kid I loved his *Whitby* trilogy. Scary and creative and I re-read constantly. #BookClub" **@crabbitcopy**

Return to form

Everything you've ever dreamed of

DANCING JAX
Publisher: Penguin
Published: 2011
Price: £8.99

After writing the *Deptford Mouselets* trilogy, Jarvis returned to young adult fiction with *Dancing Jax*. With a vivid, wild world to rival the Wyrd Museum, it's the tale of a dangerous book filled with everything you've ever dreamed of. It is found by a group of teenagers who venture into a house where three ghost-hunters met something so horrifying that two won't speak about it – and one literally can't, having torn out his vocal chords. It's dark and scary, but also a brilliant return from the author, who still has all of his powers of storytelling.

"*Dancing Jax* and the second book *Freax And Rejex*... highly recommend. Very different! #BookClub" **@MWshadowcatcher**

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Your Five Fantasy Intrigues

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Tenth Planet

Gerry Davis

"First *Who* book I read and responsible for a lifelong *Who* habit! Got it from a shop in Filey on holiday. #BookClub"

@iutley73



2. Festival Of Death

Jonathan Morris

"It just reads like a Fourth Doctor episode... brilliant book. #BookClub"

@smudge rhino2



3. Remembrance Of The Daleks

Ben Aaronovitch

"@Ben_Aaronovitch showed us what could be done and was, IMO, the blueprint for the NAs. #BookClub"

@richarddinnick



4. Timewyrm: Genesys

John Peel

"I am a fan of the *Timewyrm* series. The first in the New Adventures, they captured my imagination. #BookClub"

@Peter_J_Lewis



5. Human Nature

Paul Cornell

"The Doctor finds out what it's like to be human, and discovers that it's too difficult even for a hero like him. #BookClub"

@markjhealey

Details **Author:** Various **Publisher:** Random House **Price:** £1.99 each (Kindle)

DOCTOR WHO TIME TRIPS

Bon voyage

This new line of *Doctor Who* eBooks from Random House, under the umbrella title of *Time Trips*, collects some very interesting writers to tackle the Doctor's different incarnations, some tackling *Who* for the first time.

First up is AL Kennedy's *The Death Pit* [★★★☆☆], a solo outing for the Fourth Doctor. The story starts very promisingly, with a man being eaten by a golf bunker, described in smart, cod-Douglas Adams style, before settling into an enjoyable but fairly nondescript romp. Kennedy does a good job of aping the juxtaposition of levity and horror that typifies the best of the Fourth Doctor's reign, with a couple of nasty moments and some lovely comedy, but slightly slips up with the romantic subplot in going for 'Delta And The Bannermen'-style interspecies sitcom rather than the more reserved relationships that Seventies *Who* gave us. Worth reading for the opening alone, this is perfect commuter fare.

In Jemmy Colgan's *Into The Nowhere* [★★★★☆], the Eleventh Doctor and Clara find themselves on an inhospitable, heavily booby-trapped planet full of ambulatory skeletons. Of the stories here, Colgan's is the best. There is a well-drawn villain, the sort of vile jobsworth that the Third Doctor would have crushed with unreserved glee, along with a force which might, if you like the idea, be regarded as a cousin of a classic series monster. This vague approach to the central threat works well, avoiding lengthy exposition but giving enough information to make it worrying.

The description of the planet is wonderfully vivid, like Karn done with a huge budget, and the skeletal creatures who write in bone dust whittled from their own fingers are wonderfully disgusting and yet at the same time utterly charming.

On top of the neat world-building and gruesome description, Colgan sticks in a few references to Clara's curious character and the quest for Gallifrey in a laudable attempt at dealing with some of the mess that Steven Moffat left behind. All in all, it's an engaging story that fits the format perfectly, and is highly recommended.

Nick Harkaway's *Keeping Up With The Joneses* [★★☆☆☆] puts the Tenth Doctor in an impossible town facing an impossible storm, alongside an old friend who isn't quite herself. Dealing with a hangover from the Time War and featuring a not-quite-right version of a familiar character related to a sentient weapon, there is a feeling of been-there-done-that about this book. It also, sadly, spends far too much time wallowing in ridiculousness. Not the sharp, enjoyable ridiculousness which is part of *Doctor Who*'s indefinable magic (™), but rather the childish, burbling excess that characterised the worst of the Russell T Davies era.

The choice of temporary companion is a nice one in theory, but their return sadly brings nothing new and could quite literally have been any other character from the series. Despite Harkaway occasionally nailing the Doctor's character with pinpoint accuracy, this reads like a missed opportunity. One for the completists and undemanding readers out there.

While *Time Trips* has yet to provide us with any absolute masterpieces, Colgan's novella is definitely a must-read, and it's always a pleasure to spend time with past Doctors.

Martin Parsons



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Last Of The Gaderene
Mark Gatiss
An almost pitch-perfect prose recreation of a classic era of *Doctor Who*.



Details **Author:** Jonathan Wood **Publisher:** Titan Books **Price:** £7.99

NO HERO

Escape to... Oxford?

SciFiNow Must read now!

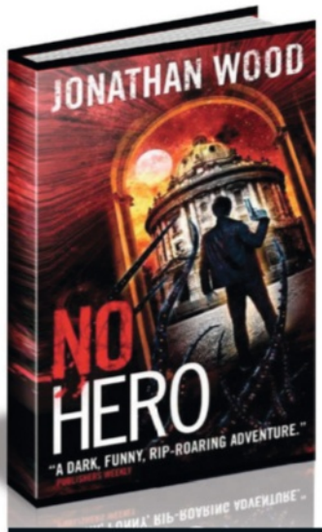
Short chapters – almost 70 for less than 400 pages – and punchy sentences ensure the pace never slows in Jonathan Wood's *No Hero*.

It oozes action, as well as gore, with a booby trap-laced trip to Peru proving worthy of a *Tomb Raider* level and frenzied battle scenes rivalling *The Cabin In The Woods*' finale for chaos and unimaginably hideous supernatural creatures. There is no expense spared when it comes to *Evil Dead* levels of blood, and the horrific, tentacle-spouting mutations are comparable to a T-Virus label from the *Resident Evil* universe's Umbrella Corporation.

The massively over-the-top – albeit gripping – fight scenes are, however, expertly juxtaposed among hilarious scenarios that regularly see the protagonist considerably out of his depth, often in alien entrails. Oxford detective Arthur Wallace is recruited to work within the elusive MI37 division after witnessing something a little out of this world, pun intended. The type of guy who is happier reserving the action in his life for the television, Wallace's resolution to every predicament usually stems from his perceived answer to the question: 'What would Kurt Russell do?' As you can imagine, the outcome is often beyond comical.

Every character is believable thanks to their flaws. Their vast skill sets – and even more lengthy discourteous personality traits – are what makes them a dysfunctional yet effective team.

Red herrings are chucked into the plot throughout, keeping you guessing as well as reading. Moreover, the conclusion is conclusive for a change, with the potential for a sequel being evident. Needless to say, part two is due for release later this year.



> "EVERY CHARACTER IS BELIEVABLE THANKS TO THEIR FLAWS"

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Stray Souls
Kate Griffin
Hilariously horrifying, the action-filled and creature-fuelled *Stray Souls* is an entertaining read.

Writer: Rjurik Davidson **Publisher:** Tor Books **Price:** £16.99

UNWRAPPED SKY

Les Miz with Minotaurs

SciFiNow Must read now!

A heady mix of political theory and existentialism set to the backdrop of revolution in a magical city, *Unwrapped Sky* would be hard to imagine before China Miéville. However, this debut novel from Australian author Rjurik Davidson can go toe-to-toe with *Perdido Street Station* and *Iron Council* as an imaginative and immersive read with a point to make.

The city of Caeli-Amur is populated with many creatures from Greek mythology, but the minotaurs, sirens and mermen jostle alongside the new trams and factories that are springing up. However, industrialisation is benefiting only the wealthy few that run the Great Houses, and workers are threatening to going on strike. With civil unrest in the air, the Great Houses – and the supernatural forces that rule them – take action to stamp out the seditionists.

Unwrapped Sky is told from three different perspectives: Kata, a assassin for hire; Boris Autec, an anxious bureaucrat, and idealistic revolutionary Maximilian. Each has their own agenda, and you're kept guessing as to who will succeed.

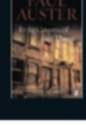
For a book that is so heavily focused on the haves and have-nots in society, the characters avoid stereotype and are richly drawn, with heroes that betray friends and villains that mourn lost loves.

The denouncement left us feeling like the wide-eyed Star-Child in *2001: A Space Odyssey* as it unifies themes of rebellion, change and the structure of the universe. However, it subverts the idea of a cosmic Messiah figure saving the day by keeping the emphasis on people power.



Jack Parsons

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

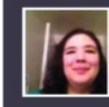
In The Country Of Last Things
Paul Auster
If you enjoy existential angst, search for hope in the remains of this dying dystopia.

YOUR READS

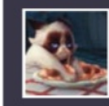
What you lot have been reading this month



"The Copper Promise by @sennydreadful. Absolutely five star. Would make a cracking TV series too! #BookClub" **@TheWriteSF**



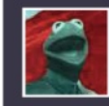
"Finally digging into *Divergent* by Veronica Roth and loving every page! #BookClub" **@09Rudie**



"Windhaven by George RR Martin and Lisa Tuttle, Interesting story and complex characters! #BookClub" **@_readerz**



"The Handmaid's Tale: as much about dealing with isolation as it is the role of a woman in a pretty sterile dystopia. #BookClub" **@UnsungTweets**



"The Girl With All The Gifts by @michaelcarey191 absolutely brilliant, like a cross between *Day Of The Dead* and *Matilda*! #BookClub" **@Kommie_Kermit**



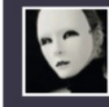
"I'm giving *S*, the JJ Abrams thing a look, and it's quite intriguing so far. #BookClub" **@Emzorin3D**



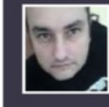
"*Insurgent*, interesting plotline but total cliffhanger for next book. Not a proper ending. #BookClub" **@thegingersquirt**



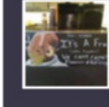
"Trudi Canavan's *Traitor Spy* trilogy. It is an insult to fantasy. The worst writing I have read in a long time. Destined for my bin. #BookClub" **@MattDuxford**



"I've been reading *Intruders* by Budd Hopkins – a fascinating look at alien abductions (Dan Curtis made the film) #BookClub" **@horror_magic**



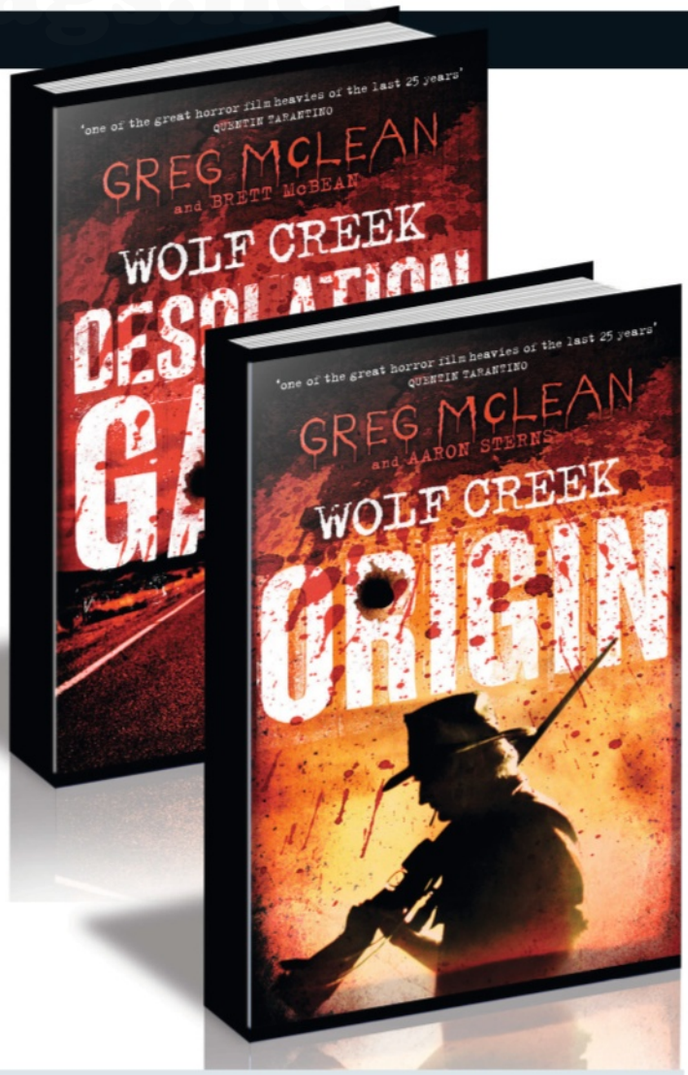
"*Royal Flash.* Lots of caddish shenanigans. #BookClub" **@Sheddenizen**



"Been reading *The Diamond Age* by Neal Stephenson. Brilliant book. #BookClub" **@your_local_god**

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

WorldMags.net



Details **Authors:** Greg McLean, Aaron Sterns, Brett McBean **Publisher:** Penguin **Price:** £5.69

WOLF CREEK ORIGIN/ DESOLATION GAME

Killer instinct

There's every reason to approach the *Wolf Creek* novels with caution. With a film sequel to Greg McLean's 2005 horror feature on the way, the idea of not one, but two books seemed like overkill. However, McLean and his co-authors justify the further exploration of serial killer Mick Taylor.

The first novel, *Origin* [★★★★☆], is the more successful of the two. McLean and Aaron Sterns detail the life of young Mick and how the death of his sister set him on a dark path, before showing how his work on a sheep station allows him to explore his killer instinct. The second, *Desolation Game* [★★★☆☆], feels slightly redundant, as Mick's time in Vietnam acts as a frame for his attack on an outback tour group.

With a clear story arc, *Origin* feels like the more complete novel. McLean and Sterns recapture the harsh, brutal atmosphere of the film while opening a window into the tortured, torturing central character. Although the 'Nam sequences provide some additional insight into how Taylor became who he is, it feels like familiar territory.

If you're interested in this journey, however, both books are really quite gripping. The former builds slowly, allowing Mick to hone his skills and develop his psychosis. The latter's structure is more like the film, turning into a stalk-and-slash halfway through. The refusal to romanticise the Outback gives the novels an edge that never goes away and, while they are gruesome and unrelentingly bleak, McLean and his co-authors generally know when to pull away.

While neither novel packs the film's raw power, fans will find enough to make a return trip to *Wolf Creek* worthwhile.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Woman
Jack Ketchum, Lucky McKee
The story of a monstrous family educating a savage woman provided the basis for the film.



Details **Author:** Josh Malerman **Publisher:** Harper Voyager **Price:** £14.99

BIRD BOX

Eye-opener

SciFiNow Must read now!

We've seen the apocalypse so many times that fresh explanations for the end of the world must be getting harder and harder to come by. Thankfully, *Bird Box* delivers an intriguing spin on the wrecked world outside, as well as a protagonist who is both complex and easy to root for.

Malorie lives with two children, Boy and Girl, who she has been preparing for this day: when they leave the house and take the boat on the river. However, they must make this journey with their eyes closed.

Over the course of the novel, Malorie remembers how people all over the world lost their minds and turned violent after witnessing something unknown, and how she took refuge in a house with fellow survivors. What is it that people see that turns them mad, and how did Malorie end up by herself?

Josh Malerman splits the story evenly between Malorie's journey with the children and her time before in the house, jumping back and forth at the end of every chapter. The former is very tense survival horror, as the three confront the reality of what the world has become without being able to see it. The latter is equally effective, a slow-burn that uses Malorie's pregnancy as a ticking clock device. We know something awful happened, but what we don't know is how.

The explanation for what caused the disaster is given early, but Malerman sensibly keeps the details unclear. He makes the most of forcing his characters to fumble around in the dark, turning a trip to the garden into a nail-biting sequence. Malorie makes for an excellent lead, serving as the reader's voice of mistrust while remaining the heart of the story.

Bird Box is a short novel at under 250 pages, but it's a highly effective thriller that will keep you gripped until the final chapter.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★☆



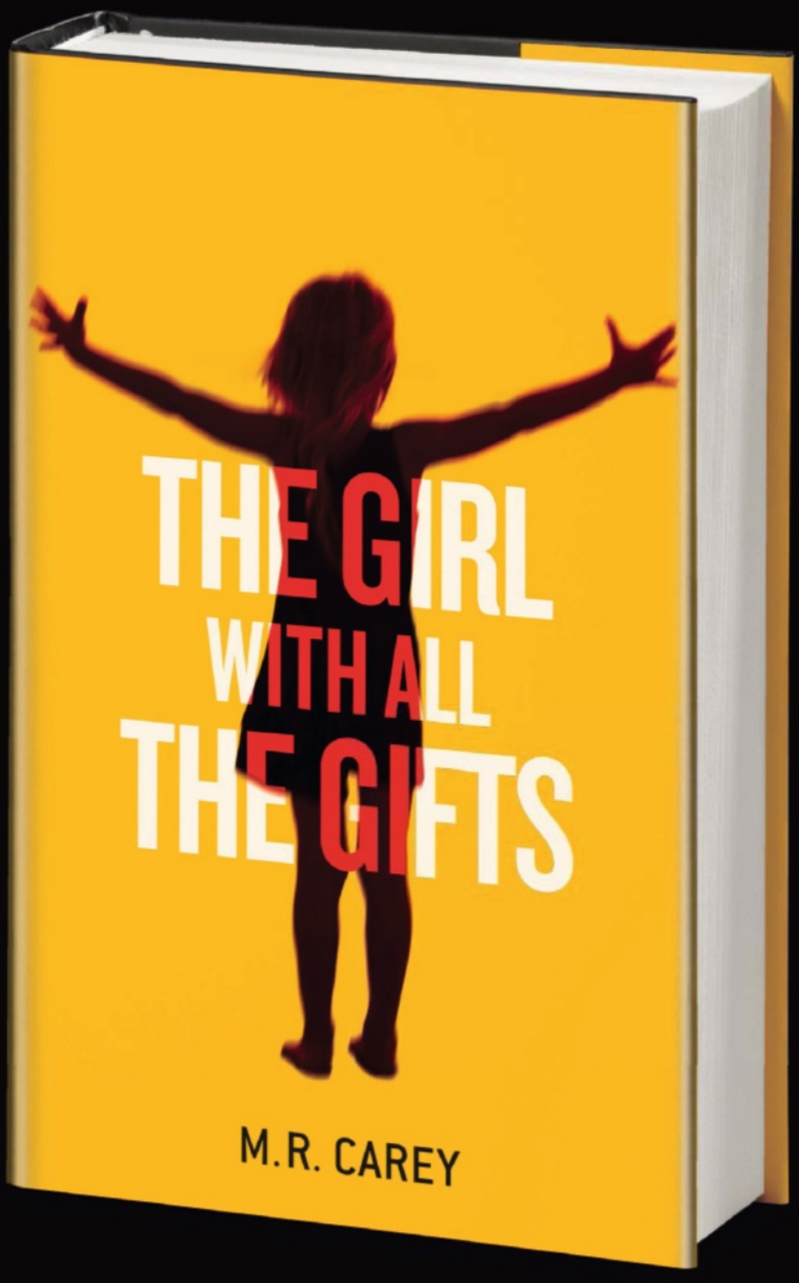
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Road
Cormac McCarthy
A man and his son travel through a ruined America in McCarthy's modern classic.

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‘TAKES HOLD OF YOU AND DOESN’T LET GO’

John Ajvide Lindqvist, author of LET THE RIGHT ONE IN



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The most HEART-STOPPING, PAGE-TURNING thriller of 2014

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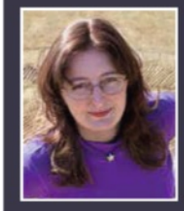
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60 SECONDS WITH

Trudi Canavan



Were you nervous at taking on *Doctor Who*?
I was, especially as I hadn't written anything that ties into an already created universe before, and sci-fi isn't what I normally write. I decided to think about it for a few days before I answered, and to my surprise an idea sprang into my head over the weekend. Then I was more excited than nervous.

Why did you choose the Third Doctor?
I didn't choose him! I wrote an adventure that would work for any Doctor or companion and let the editors select them, not because I couldn't decide, but because the story would have worked for most of them. I was pleased it was the Third, as he was a definite favourite.

Was it hard to pick a setting given you have the whole of time and space to play with?

"I WROTE AN ADVENTURE THAT WOULD WORK FOR ANY DOCTOR"

Not at all. I knew, being Australian, that I wanted to set it here. But I didn't want to use a familiar setting; I wanted to show a different sort of landscape that still captured the harsh, dry, open spaces of the Outback. I'd seen a segment on a science show about salt lakes, and while they aren't what you would see first in a tourist advertisement, they are starkly beautiful. Then I started thinking about salinity and salt mines, and my research quickly led me to discover salt crystal caves, which struck me as a very *Doctor Who* sort of setting.

Would you write for any other Doctor?
Perhaps the Eleventh. Matt Smith brought a kooky vulnerability and enthusiasm to the role that I found quite infectious. His way of speaking and moving springs to mind when I picture him, so I imagine it would be as easy to 'channel' him onto the page.

Did writing the Doctor present a different challenge to writing your own character?
No, if anything it was easier, as he was already well fleshed out. While watching the show I took note of his mannerisms in speech and movement. I do have a habit of picking up mannerisms from books, and it turns out the same thing happens when I watch a lot of the same TV show.



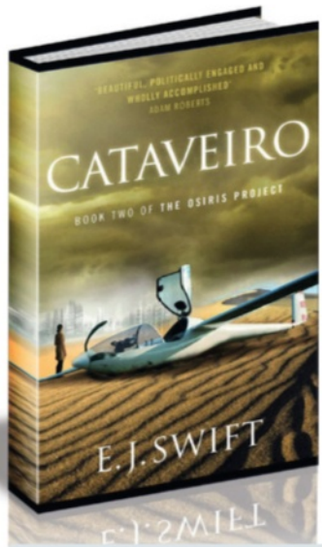
Doctor Who: Salt Of The Earth is available now from BBC Digital and Random House.

Details **Author:** EJ Swift **Publisher:** Del Rey **Price:** £12.99

CATAVEIRO

Exiled, shipwrecked and wanted

There is no need to be alarmed by the fact that *Cataveiro* is a sequel. It may be the follow up to EJ Swift's first novel, *The Osiris Project*, but mercifully time has elapsed, and the arduous narrative from book one has been replaced by new lead characters, a fresh story and some real action.



In fact, the city of Osiris is long lost and forgotten, considered nothing more than a myth by the Patagonian and Antarctic nations, at least until a ship washes ashore with a lone survivor.

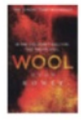
Relations are strained between the two nations, and unfortunate Antarctican Taeo has been exiled to Patagonia, where he is isn't especially welcome. Relief arrives in the form of Patagonian pilot Ramona, who is desperate to find a cure for her sick mother. She encounters Taeo and they exchange favours, which ultimately lead them to Cataveiro, a city of fate and fortune that entices travellers into staying for so long that they start to lose themselves.

Cataveiro has a soulful, lonely quality as Taeo and Ramona embark on their missions, haunted by memories of the past and visions of what lies ahead. Ramona is smart and compassionate, but somehow manages to irritate almost everyone she meets, while Taeo is struggling to get over an unfortunate opium addiction. Their imperfections keep them grounded and likeable, preventing EJ Swift from slipping into predictable characterisation.

The politics of *Cataveiro* are a little vague, and although it is established that there is a cultural and geographical divide, the history isn't clear enough and doesn't add much to the plot. It is unlikely that this trilogy will set the world on fire, but as dystopian fiction goes it is an intriguing world to get lost in.

Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Wool
Hugh Howey
Mankind survives by living in giant underground silos, away from the deadly air outside.

Details **Author:** Michael Boatman **Publisher:** Angry Robot **Price:** £8.99

LAST GOD STANDING

What if God was one of us...

Remember Jim Carrey declaring that he could do a better job than Morgan Freeman's God in *Bruce Almighty*? Well, meet Lando Calrissian Darnell Cooper, who can go one better: he is God, or at least he was before he decided to retire and become a stand-up comedian. With Lando's old position now vacant, a hoard of defunct gods begin to vie for the job, unaware that a dark, murderous force is at work and growing stronger by the day. There is one other minor issue: Lucifer, who like Lando, has also taken early retirement and lives on Earth as a reincarnated mortal.

On the surface, *Last God Standing* has everything going for it. The premise is original, the characters wittily observed and the opening chapters enticing, yet something doesn't quite work. It takes time and effort to digest the narrative, as well as the many different voices, forms and visions that Lando experiences. Even with some helpfully highlighted print it is hard to work out who's actually speaking.

Also, Lando's stand-up routines are disappointingly not that funny. He may look like Chris Rock, but the material is very different, deep and full of American politics that may not translate well for British readers. The real comedy comes from the dysfunctional Cooper family, who are a written homage to *The Nutty Professor*'s Klumps and *Coming To America*'s verbally jousting barbers.



With more clarity and less theology, Michael Boatman may have been on to a real winner with *Last God Standing*, but if it fails to set the literary world alight, Mr Murphy and his film buddies could do a lot worse!

Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Good Omens
Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman
A witch makes an attempt to decipher some very mixed-up prophecies.

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GAMEBOOKS BITE BACK!



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WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

HOW **GREG MCLEAN** BROUGHT WOLF CREEK'S MICK TAYLOR, ONE OF MODERN HORROR'S MOST ICONIC MONSTERS, FROM THE SILVER SCREEN TO THE PRINTED PAGE...



Nearly a decade after *Wolf Creek* first terrified audiences on the big screen, acclaimed filmmaker Greg Mclean has brought his horrifying creation Mick Taylor to the literary world with two prequel novels. *Wolf Creek: Origin*, co-written with Aaron Sterns, depicts Mick's youth as a jackaroo on a remote sheep farm, where he discovers his true nature, while *Wolf Creek: Desolation Game*, co-written with Brett McBean, takes the character to the horrors of Vietnam. SciFiNow talks to Mclean about what drove him to return and the challenges of exploring a monster.

It has been nearly ten years since *Wolf Creek* was first released. Why has the Mick Taylor character stuck with you?

Mick bought together a number of diverse things that were elemental to my background and development. He's an Outback character who lives on the land, works with animals in a harsh environment, speaks in an old-fashioned style and appears to be from an older or forgotten generation. I grew up on a farm in the bush surrounded by animals, so hunting, shooting and that lifestyle were close to how I was raised. Plus, as a huge horror and thriller fan, the idea I had was to see if I could create an iconically Aussie 'Boogieman' who was as scary as Freddy, Jason or Hannibal Lecter, but was drawn from Australian true crime stories, urban legends and folklore.

You're working on a sequel to the film as well. Why did you decide that novels would be the way to go for the prequels?

I thought the prequels would be much more character-based drama. Yes, they are chilling and disturbing horror tales, but they're also character studies of people and places I really felt would be well served over 300-400 pages of a novel, as opposed to 90 pages of screenplay. The atmosphere and texture of the time and place are as important to me as anything else in the book, so they're very evocative and ultimately very creepy. Plus, the point of view is Mick's, so it's first person, as opposed to the more traditional point of view of the movies. So we're inside the head of the killer as he develops. It's much more complicated and a really rich, but black as pitch, space to explore.

Did you worry about exploring the character of Mick Taylor too much in these prequels?

It's an interesting question, and definitely a concern. However, I think it only becomes a problem if what we explore isn't thrilling, terrifying or amazing. With a character like this, exploring where he came from can be really unexpected, moving, sad and generally FUBAR. The good thing about two timelines (ie before and after *Wolf Creek*) is that both have finite endings, and certain events need to happen in order for the madness to deepen and continue. There's a crazy long-term story plan in place, but it's all about seeing how these books and the new movie connect with fans. We hope horror fans embrace them and want to go deeper Mick's world. You may want a stiff drink and a good lie down after you've been there, but you can remind yourself, "It's only a movie, it's only a movie, it's only a movie. Wait, but it's based upon actual events... oh shit!"

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Lost in the wilderness

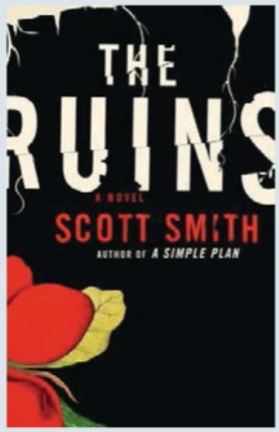
FIVE BOOKS IN WHICH CIVILISATION IS SORELY MISSED



OFF SEASON

Jack Ketchum

A group of friends travel to a remote cabin in Maine, only to be set upon by a group of inbred cannibals in this savage gut-punch of a novel from the perennially underrated Ketchum.



THE RUINS

Scott Smith

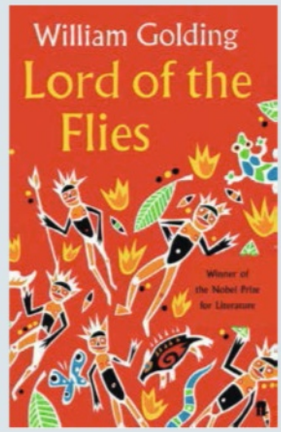
A visit to Mexico goes horribly wrong when a pair of young couples stumble across sentient carnivorous vines that can mimic their speech in Smith's novel and subsequent film.



DESPERATION

Stephen King

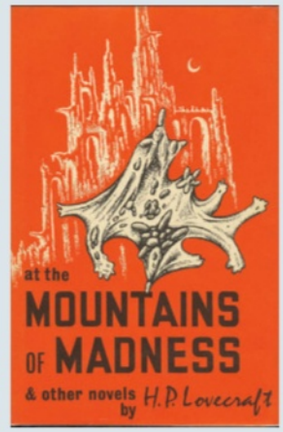
A small town has turned into an abandoned hell as a group of strangers take on a colossal sheriff possessed by the demon spirit Tak. After a strong first half it gets a bit silly.



LORD OF THE FLIES

William Golding

Few authors have written about the loss of civilisation as effectively as Golding in *Lord Of The Flies*. The tale of stranded boys struggling for power is still every bit as powerful.



AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

HP Lovecraft

The wilderness of the Antarctic is nothing compared to the madness awaiting Dyer and Danforth in the abandoned city of the Elder Things.

The original film paid homage to a certain era of filmmaking with that kind of lean bleakness. Was it a challenge to retain that atmosphere in prose?

It was a challenge, as it's defining how that quality works with words alone. That said, each book does have a different voice, because they are quite different in tone from each other. *Wolf Creek: Origin* with Aaron is quite brooding, darker and interior, while I'd say *Wolf Creek: Desolation Game* with Brett has some scary supernatural elements and more action while also revealing Mick's wartime experience in Vietnam. Working with different writers with different voices does change the overall tone, but so long as we're all serving the character and being true to the story it seems to work okay.

"AS WRITERS, OUR JOB IS TO INHABIT ALL POINTS OF VIEW, EVEN FOR CHARACTERS WE ARE TERRIFIED BY"

Did you ask actor John Jarratt what his thoughts were on where the character had come from? Did you feel like you were writing for him when you were writing the novels?

I had spoken at length with John about Mick's background, so I had a fair idea of where he was drawing the character from. But Aaron did his own research, and spent time with John getting into his mind and learning about where he grew up and finally taking a trip there himself to immerse himself in the place. It was quite a hair-raising journey I understand, but one that certainly helped him get into the spirit of proceedings. I think when writing I always think of John's voice, but as Mick, and once I get into writing Mick, things get real nasty real quick. I know both Aaron and Brett said the same thing: once they got into the zone as Mick he just kind of starts speaking. Maybe there's a little Mick inside us all? Now that's a deeply scary thought. But seriously, as writers, our job is to inhabit as fully as possible all points of view as valid and truthful, even those for characters we personally loathe and are terrified by.

Do you think you will continue writing novels as well as making films?

Absolutely, I have another I've completed, which is a science fiction novel I have sent out to publishers now, and I have two more I'd like to do. It's another outlet for story, and like lots of creators it's a compulsion with me. I can't stop doing it, and have spend my entire life thinking of stories, worlds, characters, scenes, events, plots and themes. It's all story in the end, and that's my drug of choice. I'm as hooked on its magic today as I was the first time I saw *Alien*, *Star Wars* or *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or read *Dracula*, *Call Of Cthulhu* or *The Tower Of The Elephant* by Robert E Howard.



Wolf Creek: Origin and *Wolf Creek: Desolation Game* are available in Kindle Edition now.



Greg Mclean terrified viewers in 2005 with Outback horror *Wolf Creek*.

WorldMags.net

WorldMags.net

Writers: Brian Michael Bendis **Artists:** Various
Publisher: Marvel/Panini **Price:** £9.99

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY: ANGELA

Finding event fatigue



Brian Michael Bendis seems to be struggling to get into the heads of the Guardians. His debut tackling the space-faring superheroes showed promise, but there's something about the six issues collected here that doesn't quite gel. If this had been written by an inexperienced writer, perhaps we'd put any surface issues down to it getting caught up in the wider Marvel universe. But Bendis is no stranger to dealing with event fatigue, and so *Guardians Of The Galaxy: Angela* should deal better with the slew of characters and events dropping in and out of play.

Somewhere in the world there's a comic-book collector who has been praying for the return of Neil Gaiman's Angela. That wish has been granted, but we struggle to understand why. Her inclusion feels throwaway, and the dialogue cheesy and forgettable. It's going to take more than a consultancy role from Gaiman to sell us on her introduction to the Marvel universe.

Some inconsistencies in the art department don't help either. Sara Pichelli and Olivier Coipel continue to impress, though Francesco Francavilla's film-noir style is a little out of place. The guy can draw a beautiful splash; his pages should catapult the action forward, but the pacing isn't there.

Guardians Of The Galaxy is still struggling to escape the shadow cast by the exit of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning all those years ago. Traditionally, the book has been most successful as a grand space opera, and we are struggling to settle into Bendis' quip-heavy flow. There's plenty to be entertained by, but on the whole it feels inconsistent. That's not to say it's not worth giving it a try, but it has a long way to go to before it becomes a 'must-read'.

Josh West

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Thanos Imperative
Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning
If you're looking for a bodacious entry into the wider Marvel universe, you can't go wrong here.





Writer: Jacques Lob **Artist:** Jean-Marc Rochette **Publisher:** Titan **Price:** £14.99

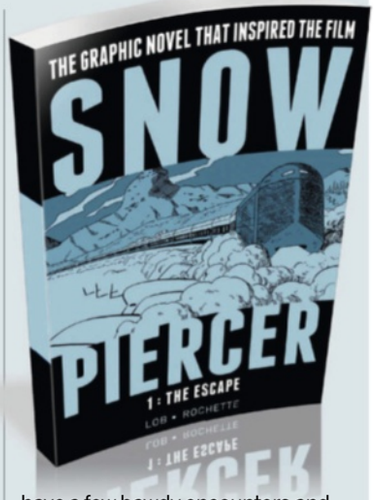
SNOWPIERCER 1: THE ESCAPE

Winter of discontent

Francophone comics continue their belated Anglophonic invasion, not quite in the wake of Bong Joon-ho's all-star *Snowpiercer* adaptation, which got jumped by the Weinsteins on its way to the multiplex, but awkwardly prior.

Luckily, hype plays to *Snowpiercer 1: The Escape*'s advantage – nothing gets cinema fans and comic lovers riled up like something they're told they can't see or read. Originally released in 1982 as *Le Transperceneige*, this is amazingly the book's English-language debut, and while time hasn't entirely diluted its power, it's a less sophisticated beast than many readers will be expecting.

Set on a train that zips around an ice-bound post-apocalypse, social and economic injustice is transposed onto this diesel-powered microcosm. The elites enjoy their pick of the dwindling resources, while the poor shiver in cattle wagons, but the train is slowing down and there's a plot afoot to decouple the disadvantaged entirely. Proloff, a prole from the back, breaks into the front carriages and teams up with Adeline, a naive middle-class advocate for cattle-class rights. In typically bleak bande dessinée style, they get treated like crap, have a few bawdy encounters and resign themselves to being heroic.



Snowpiercer's strength is in its ideas and their stark depiction, but while it was written in the brow-beating age of *Akira* and *V For Vendetta*, it sees release post-*Tank Girl* and *Transmetropolitan*'s brash irreverence. We've stopped being numbed by our inevitably shitty future, and started laughing at it.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Last American
Alan Grant, John Wagner/ Mike McMahon
A hysterically affecting story of a lone survivor post collapse.

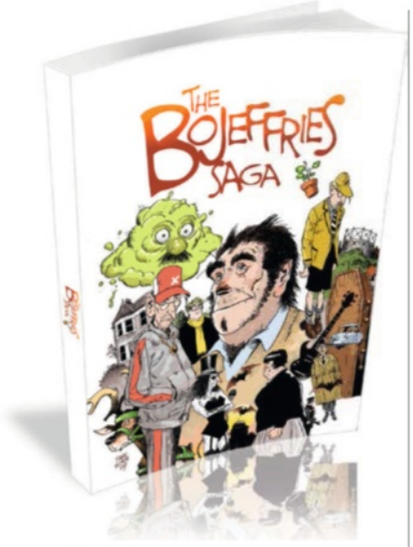
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Details **Author:** Alan Moore **Artist:** Steve Parkhouse **Publisher:** Knockabout Comics **Price:** £9.99

THE BOJEFFRIES SAGA

SciFiNow Must read now!

Moore-den family



While his creative endeavours become more purposefully esoteric and his public persona steadily more caustic, there's a lot of disarming warmth at the heart of some of Alan Moore's best books that can be easy to overlook. From Nite Owl's paunch to Irrageddon's wounded rage, Moore built his fearsome reputation on bringing the nervous sweat and hangdog expression of humanity to genres that had previously fallen thrall to lumpen archetypes.

Starting in the *Warrior* anthology comic in 1983 with art from Steve Parkhouse (*2000 AD*'s *The Journal Of Luke Kirby* and Marvel UK's *Doctor Who*), *The BoJeffries Saga* is perhaps Moore's most obviously personal work, albeit through a self-deprecating lens of *Munsters/Addams Family* parody as a dysfunctional family of supernatural beings live out their daft lives in a Midlands terrace.

After a baffling publishing history that sits alongside *Marvelman/Miracleman* and prefigures *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* for seeing chapters spluttered out through a cacophony of indies and at seemingly random intervals, it's lovely to see the whole thing under one (tasteful, compared to the horrible 1992 collection) cover, and in its finest packaging yet.

Collecting all the stories, including a new 24-page offering – the post-modern 'After They Were Famous', which takes a few already deeply dated swipes at *Celebrity Big Brother*, New Labour and Marilyn Manson – *The BoJeffries Saga* evolves as all such strips do, from throwaway gags to its own internal mythology, that comes to an indulgent climax with the box-fresh epilogue.



It's the earlier, unguarded material that proves the most fascinating, and it's easy to imagine Moore's childhood in the place of Reth BoJeffries as he enjoys waterlogged caravanning holidays and flicks through comics in campsite shops. It's a well-thumbed portrait of working-class life in some twilight period between the Fifties and Eighties, where the supernatural-set dressing barely disguises keenly observed sketches of racism, Thatcherism, crumbling bureaucracy and small-town boredom. It's wonderful stuff, and as powerful and irreverent a document of blue-collar Britain lost between the sofa cushions of the dole and double-glazing as Ken Loach guest-editing the *Beano*.

Outside the teen comic tradition, Parkhouse's style takes on a touch of Raymond Briggs circa-*Fungus The Bogeyman* and *Bash Street Kids* creator Leo Baxendale – the darkly humorous tonal dissonance between the art and antics making Moore and Parkhouse fellow travellers with wry smut-strip *Viz*.

The BoJefferies Saga was always an incongruous addition to *Warrior*'s oppressive and angsty brand of sci-fi storytelling, far more at home with the likes of *V For Vendetta* and cyborg assassin Axel Pressbutton, but here it can be fully appreciated on its own terms as a moment of half-smile sincerity from deep behind the mythology and mysticism of Alan Moore.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★☆

"A WELL-THUMBED PORTRAIT OF WORKING-CLASS LIFE"





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Unfunnies
Mark Millar/Anthony Williams
This Hanna-Barbera spoof is a similar retro-themed lost classic, albeit not quite as touching.

60 SECONDS WITH Pat Mills



***Accident Man* keeps coming back, and there's always reprints and talk of movies. What do you think has made him so enduring?**
Hitmen can be rather predictable, but not Mike Fallon, whose murderous 'accidents' are ingenious, credible, technically feasible and often funny. And Mike himself is rather likeable, despite his shallow nature. He's *GQ* man, and fills the hole in his soul with the latest consumer goods, cars, bikes, fashions and dating super models. The idea at the core of the character is simple and fascinating – a guy who kills people and makes it look like an accident or suicide. It's also relevant to the times we live in.

"WE SEEM TO BE MUCH MORE CYNICAL THAN AMERICAN COMICS"

***Accident Man* definitely seems to fit neatly into the darkly comic anti-hero tradition of British comics. Why do you think we have such a knack for them?**
It's very British, isn't it? We seem to be much more cynical than most American comics or films, although I think we also admire and emulate *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Breaking Bad* and *Deadwood*. Maybe we're cynical and go for dark heroes because we're skeptical of traditional British values and heroes like Dan Dare and Biggles. We know life's not like that, and never was, particularly in their heyday. Perhaps it's a desire to reflect the truth. I remember Peter Cushing once saying he based his life on Tom Merry, a popular schoolboy hero written by the creator of Billy Bunter. I wonder who people would base their lives on today? Accident Man? Judge Dredd? Doesn't bear thinking about!

Bond is sleek and cool in a way he wasn't when *Accident Man* first came out. Are you ever tempted to bring Fallon into the present?
Sure. We have a one-off *Accident Man* story that we hope to put online shortly. The Armani suits are gone, and he now has a shaved head, which we felt was more 2014. The crime is also present day – he has to kill a banker who is planning to tell all and lives in a gated community in London's dockland, so Fallon trains a dog to attack when it smells the banker's unique aftershave. A tragic 'accident' follows.



The Complete Accident Man is out now, priced at £19.99.

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MARVEL KNOWS BEST

WORDS **LAURA SNEDDON**

As Captain Marvel goes cosmic in her latest return, we catch up with writer and Carol Corps leader Kelly Sue DeConnick...

When *Captain Marvel* was relaunched last summer with writer Kelly Sue DeConnick at the helm and former Ms Marvel Carol Danvers taking up the mantle, the reaction was, well, dramatic. Not only was Captain Marvel changing creative team and costume, but also gender.

Or at least that should have been the main newsworthy detail, except some fans were too busy lamenting the loss of the more revealing Ms Marvel costume in favour of the sleek and powerful new look for Carol. Nevertheless, the new title was a smash hit, and this month sees the book relaunched again under the same writer and with a new #1 issue.

The earlier series is now available in three collections, but they are by no means required reading if you want to dive right in. "Yes. If we're doing it right, that's how it should work," says DeConnick. "If you've read the background you'll have a richer experience, but you should be able to jump right in, enjoy the story and follow it without any background."

DeConnick has been active in the comic-book industry for the last decade. Her 2011 miniseries *Osborn* proved popular, and it's fitting that DeConnick's rise in the ranks at Marvel dovetailed with that of Carol Danvers. Alongside Captain Marvel, DeConnick fans can also pick up *Ghost* from Dark Horse, and *Pretty Deadly* from Image and co-creator Emma Rios.

The character of Captain Marvel has been around since 1967, created by Stan Lee and Gene Colan as an adventuring space warrior. The plot of the new *Captain Marvel* series is under wraps, but DeConnick reveals a clue that points to at least one similarity with the captain of old: "In the new series, Carol goes cosmic."

And the fans are already excited. It was perhaps the overly antagonistic reaction from a vocal minority that spurred the huge fan movement that followed the initial publication. First hundreds, and then thousands of fans flocked to Tumblr to proclaim their love for the character in her new role. The Carol Corps were born.

These fans travel to conventions dressed as their hero (kudos to Jamie McKelvie for the brilliant costume design), encouraging others to try out the title and support one of the strongest female superheroes in modern comics. And as for the Marvel movie rumour mill, the Corps have already decided who should play Danvers on screen: *Battlestar Galactica*'s Katee Sackhoff. In short, they're pretty awesome.

"Right?!" DeConnick exclaims. "I'm very lucky in that Carol's fanbase – the 'Carol Corps' – are an incredibly positive and supportive bunch. There was some outcry about the costume change at the beginning, but not as much as you might imagine. And it was far outweighed by the messages of support."

Captain Marvel is not alone in having such a quickly mobilised fanbase. *Young Avengers* gathered a similar following on Tumblr that certainly seemed to translate into cosplay and collected edition sales, if not month-to-month figures. It's a market that is perhaps ripe for comic publishers to explore. "Tumblr follower numbers aren't public, so I don't know if that's something Marvel is aware of or not," DeConnick muses. "It's nothing we've discussed. But they are aware of the Corps and have been wonderfully supportive and interactive. The convention producers have been good to the Corps as well."

Interestingly, one fact that detractors have overlooked is that this isn't the first time Captain Marvel has been a woman: the second Captain Marvel, back in the early Eighties, was police lieutenant Monica Rambeau of New Orleans, complete with a fabulous and non-revealing costume. Monica also appears in the second of DeConnick's previous *Captain Marvel* story arcs.

It's clear from DeConnick's storytelling that the writer is terribly fond of Carol Danvers. Indeed, while it's no great surprise to see DeConnick return for this relaunch, fans were delighted all the same. "Oh, she's been living in my head for a couple of years now, so... yeah," the writer explains. "She holds a special place for me. Perhaps even more than Carol, I've come to feel very protective of her network – both her fanbase and her supporting cast."

In true Marvel style, the reader isn't just shown the superhero side of Carol's life, but also her personal trials and tribulations, something that DeConnick feels is integral to the character's development. "Yes, absolutely. None of these characters – as iconic as they are – have any resonance in a vacuum. They need to have people around them who their choices affect. They need to have reasons to make the sacrifices they make. There needs to be human consequences."

While the earlier *Captain Marvel* series featured a multitude of talented artists, continuity fans will be delighted to know that David Lopez (*X-Men*, *Mystic*) is on board for the long haul. "Oh, David is in," DeConnick confirms. "Expect there to be a fill-in one-shot here and there, but David is in for the long run."

The disproportionately small number of female creators in the superhero comic industry has been a hot topic in recent years, and one that has put pressure on female writers and artists to take a stand on top of simply producing great work. "I love it and hate it," DeConnick sighs. "I hate getting questions about writing female characters ('Pretend they're people') or asking if I speak for women ('No'), but I feel tremendous gratitude for the opportunity I have to be a stepping stone for the next generation of female creators, who will no doubt do more and better.

"That is a privilege I would not trade for anything."

> "SUPERHEROES NEED TO HAVE REASONS TO MAKE THE SACRIFICES THEY MAKE – THERE NEEDS TO BE HUMAN CONSEQUENCES"
> KELLY SUE DECONNICK


The new *Captain Marvel* title sees Carol Danvers in the titular role.





Captain Marvel #1 by Kelly Sue DeConnick and David Lopez is published by Marvel and out now.

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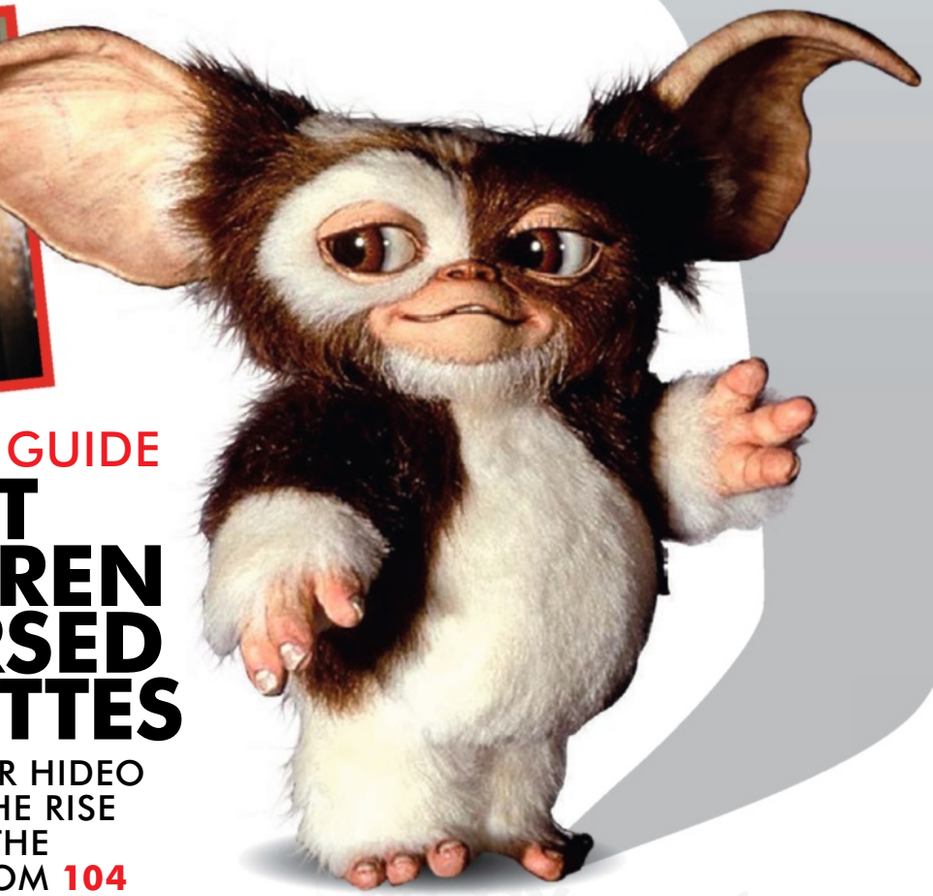
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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO J-HORROR

IT WAS BY NO MEANS THE FIRST JAPANESE HORROR MOVIE, BUT WHEN RING CRAWLED OUT OF HIDEO NAKATA'S DARKENED IMAGINATION AND INTO 1998, IT KICKED OFF A BOOM IN SUPERNATURAL SCARES THAT EVENTUALLY SPREAD ACROSS ASIA AND DUG ITS TALONS INTO HOLLYWOOD. WE GO BACK TO THE BIRTH OF THE JAPANESE HORROR BOOM WITH THE MEN WHO MADE IT HAPPEN TO UNCOVER ITS HIDDEN GEMS, FIND OUT WHERE IT WENT WRONG AND WHERE IT WILL GO NEXT…

WORDS **CALUM WADDELL**

It is hard to believe that more than 15 years have gone by since a super-scary spook show from the Land of the Rising Sun called *Ringu* (herein referred to as *Ring*) caught the imagination of an international audience. Released in 1998 and becoming a blockbuster hit in its home country, *Ring* was deemed by critics and horror hounds alike to signal a 'new wave' of contemporary creepy cinema. Helmed by rising talent Hideo Nakata, who was soon romanced by Hollywood studios, the slow-burning shocker was such a success that it inspired two sequels of its own, as well as South Korean and American remakes. Moreover, a slew of cash-in productions soon surfaced, each following the formula of a sinister spirit that subtly, but sinisterly, stalks individuals or families who have committed some kind of intrusion on the ghost's otherwise 'peaceful' hibernation.

The immediate impact of the J-horror explosion also travelled to neighbouring Asian territories, with South Korea forming a cottage industry of *Ring*-like lunacy (of which 2003's *A Tale Of Two Sisters* is probably the most celebrated), Thailand joining the trend (reaching a peak with 2004's *Shutter*) and Hong Kong unleashing a few fright flicks of its own, most famously 2002's *The Eye*. Indicating that Tinseltown was also taking notice, all three of the mentioned movies would spawn American rehashes. Make no mistake, for a few short years it seemed like J-horror controlled the direction that celluloid shockers would take, with the long-standing effect of this period undoubtedly seen in the box office behemoth that is the *Paranormal Activity* series. Indeed, after *Ring*, phones were revealed in numerous films to be a perfect portal for poltergeist-related rowdiness, while cameras, PCs and televisions were also fair game for contact with an uncanny being.

While it is arguably important to separate *Ring* – and its immediate successors – as representative of the J-horror genre that we all now know and love, it is also vital to explain where Nakata and his contemporaries got their ideas from. After all, Japan boasts an impressive, if not exactly extensive, background in fear-filmmaking, and any guide to the country's eeriest achievements would look a lot less lofty without acknowledging some of these pre-*Ring* pot-boilers.

So it is, then, that attention needs to be drawn towards such monochrome masterworks as *Ugetsu* (1953), *Onibaba* (1964) and *Kuroneko* (1968). Each of these early epics is connected through their historical setting, usually an epoch that is plagued with civil war, and they also have a folk tale essence about them. For instance, the plots often feature peasants in the countryside who encounter some form of ghoulish ghastliness and/or temptation. The visually stunning *Ugetsu*, directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, is based in the late 16th Century, and tells of two pauper brothers hoping to profit from the conflict that is destroying their village. A seductive female spirit lures one of them from his family, with calamitous consequences. The even better-known *Onibaba* – still considered one of the most accomplished horror opuses of all time – focuses on two 14th Century women who slaughter passing soldiers for their belongings. One of the ladies discovers a demonic mask that becomes stuck to her face and, when removed, reveals hideous disfigurement. Despite this obviously supernatural surprise, the aura of otherworldly evil is deliciously ambivalent throughout.

Fittingly, *Onibaba*'s director Kaneto Shindo continued to serve up suspense with his subsequent chiller *Kuroneko*. Once again highlighting a combat-torn backdrop, *Kuroneko*'s tale of rape and revenge is as confrontational and carefully paced as any of the great Sixties horror films (and this is the decade that gave birth to *Psycho*, *Black Sunday* and *Night Of The Living Dead*). In addition, *Ugetsu*, *Onibaba* and *Kuroneko* are far more sexually explicit than their American counterparts, which explaind their art-house popularity in the West at the time of their release.

Other essential oddities from this era include 1959's shot-in-colour *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* (translated as *Ghost Story Of Yotsuya*), which is adapted from a 19th Century play and introduced the long-haired vengeful female phantom that *Ring* would later ⇨

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"WHEN I TOLD PEOPLE THAT THE GHOST WAS GOING TO COME OUT FROM THE TELEVISION, THEY WOULD JUST SMILE AT ME BECAUSE IT SOUNDED STUPID"

HIDEO NAKATA

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K-HORROR

A short history of South Korean chillers

Korean fear flicks may date back to such shockers as *The Snake Woman* (1969) and *Ghosts Of Chosun* (1970), both films that feature female ghouls and an explicit bestial element, but it was with the success of *Ring* that the J-horror template began to inspire a seemingly endless array of irritable and indigenous celluloid entities.

Before the American version of *Ring*, Korea produced its own – almost identikit – rehash, known internationally as *The Ring Virus*. The end result, released in 1999, is perfectly good and boasts solid production values, but it is so similar to its Japanese cousin that it inevitably suffers under its shadow. Even less effective are the famous Korean series of school-set spooks that followed the huge success of 1998's *Whispering Corridors* (spawning 1999's *Memento Mori*, 2003's *Wishing Stairs*, 2005's *Voice* and 2009's *A Blood Pledge*), films which are so subtle in their supernatural shenanigans that very little seems to actually happen. Nevertheless, these titles do touch upon a recurring theme in K-horror: that of the bullied female and the pressure to be 'beautiful' in a society that is often criticised for its sexism (see also: 2004's *Bunshinsaba* and 2006's *To Sir, With Love*).

While not half bad, terror tale *Phone* (2002), about a series of creepy calls from mysterious numbers, obviously takes its tropes from Tokyo. Meanwhile, the pedestrian-paced likes of *Cello* (2005) and *Red Eye* (2005) repeat the now familiar *Ring*-style girl-ghosts and time-subversion of *Ju-On* to monotonous effect. The more structurally ambitious *Hypnotised* (2004), about a seemingly schizophrenic woman, gained national notoriety, predominantly thanks to its leading lady, Kim Hye-Soo, who shows an evident willingness to drop her robe. The nonsensical *Spider Forest* (2004) gained acclaim from some sectors for being 'Lynchian', although only the most tolerant of genre fans need apply.

Far more interesting is claustrophobic creeper *R-Point* (2004), which is set in a haunted army base during the Vietnam War (which South Korea followed the US into). Given its nation's own obsession with having a military at the ready in case of an invasion from the North, *R-Point* is one of the most personal – and paranoid – paranormal pot-boilers to come from the country. Also essential is Pil-sung Yim's *Hansel And Gretel* (2007), in which a wrong turn in the woods leads to imprisonment in a Brothers Grimm-style home with a trio of chilling children. This might be considered a minority opinion, but *Hansel And Gretel* is an even spookier and more visually striking 'adult fairy tale' than Guillermo del Toro's more celebrated *Pan's Labyrinth*, and in a country where plastic surgery is publicly pushed and promoted, 2006's *Cinderella* is a must-see, and frequently grim, ghost story.

While Hollywood has been hesitant to remake much in the way of Seoul-based goosebumpers, anyone who caught the Kiefer Sutherland-starring bout of silliness *Mirrors* (2008) should check out its superior home-grown inspiration, *Into The Mirror* (2003). Of course, 2003's *A Tale Of Two Sisters* – an instant classic of mood and malevolence – also obtained the English-language treatment as the redundant *The Uninvited* (2009). As in most cases, the original is the one to watch.

Also worth mentioning is the muddled but aesthetically mesmerising *The Red Shoes* (2005) – another fairy tale-influenced oddity – 2004's *Dead Friend* (aka *The Ghost*), which does the *Ring* thing, but with more menace than many of the K-copycats, and the more mythical wispiness of *Arang* (2006). Moreover, last year saw one of Korea's best horror hits to date, the mesmerising and manic *Killer Toon*. These films all owe their existence to the J-horror boom but, in its own way, K-horror has initiated an identity of its own that – thanks to the recurring presence of a fiercely indigenous social commentary (sometimes tackling sexism and the North/South split) – occasionally rivals its inspiration in providing a permeable viewing experience.



2005's *Cello* highlighted how much Korean horror owed to J-horror.



Many Japanese films, like *Tomie*, have since spawned franchises.

popularise worldwide. The contemporary-set *Jigoku* (1960) is another formidable frightener that scholars of J-horror owe it to themselves to check out. Once again, this chiller opts to capture its horror hauntings in full colour. Finally, mention has to be given to Kwaidan (1964), which brought the anthology format to Tokyo-based terror and remains a favourite of some of the filmmakers that set the stage for the screen spectres who spooked audiences almost four decades later.

"*Kwaidan* is one of my top five horror films of all time," explains Takashi Shimizu, the director of the *Ju-On: The Grudge* series. "These older films were a huge influence on me. I think what is unique about Japanese horror is that we, in many cases, avoid straightforward expressions of fear, such as a masked killer with a knife. Instead, we choose to explore more psychological fears. I would say that our horror is heavily influenced by Buddhism, cultural and historical events, and also curses."

Certainly, the exotic (not to mention erotic) eeriness of *Onibaba* and its contemporaries provided evidence to viewers of the time of both Japan's post-war/post-Empire identity struggles (combat is equated with evil; gluttony is punished, and the military – as evidenced in *Kuroneko* – is not above criminal activity) and a more grounded approach to paranormal malevolence. In these early creepers, for instance, heads do not spin around, and if Amityville was based in Nagasaki the haunted house would probably not come with a gateway to hell in the basement, let alone bleeding walls. Ultimately, the true classics of J-horror revel in the art of understatement, this often being what allows them to creep up on the viewer and nestle under the



Films like *Uzumaki* followed the trail blazed by *Ring*.







2001's *Suicide Club* represents perhaps the finest of Japanese horror.

skin. That said, prior to *Ring*, Japanese genre-makers continued to experiment with their indigenous shock cinema, leading to a notable move away from the more teased-at trepidations of *Onibaba* and its ilk.

"When I was growing up, I saw a lot of horror films," enthuses Noboru Iguchi, director of infamous made-for-video splatter-shockers *The Machine Girl* (2008) and *RoboGeisha* (2009). "The film that has most heavily influenced me and my work is the brilliant *Hausu* – or *House*, as it is known outside of Japan – by director Nobuhiko Obayashi."

Not to be confused with Steve Miner's franchise-spawning schlocker of the same name from 1986, 1977's *House* is a cavalcade of colour and confusion that is part comedy and part creepiness, telling of some schoolgirls who become entrapped by the most surreal maniac-mansion of all time. Aesthetically indebted to the work of Italy's Mario Bava while still very much its own beast, House actually anticipates the likes of *The Evil Dead*, with a haunted home quickly unleashing a tornado of terror upon its female residents. However, this Japanese oddity is also far artier and more esoteric than any comparable American feature. It is also one of the key titles in Japanese horror, inspiring the form's more hyperactively paced and voraciously visualised romps across the Eighties such as *Evil Dead Trap* (1988), Shinya Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989) also his little-seen – but worthwhile – monster mash-up *Hiruko The Goblin* (1991). Although new Japanese horror films were in the minority during the Seventies and Eighties (the frequent sado-masochistic fantasies of the notorious *Guinea Pig* series – in which women are often mistreated in pseudo-reality style fictions – are an anomaly that few will want to investigate), the likes of Tsukamoto provided evidence of an emerging and evolving fright factory.

"FANS OF MODERN J-HORROR OWE IT TO THEMSELVES TO SEARCH OUT A LOT OF THE OLDER FILMS" Y'DAI YAMAGUCHI

"I think fans of modern J-horror owe it to themselves to search out a lot of the older films," admits Yudai Yamaguchi, the writer of the Japanese zombie/kung-fu hit *Versus* (2000) and director of such low-budget wonders as *Battlefield Baseball* (2003) and *Meatball Machine* (2005). "*Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* was, I think, groundbreaking. It had a very inventive way of depicting its ghosts, which is something that paved the way for many later movies. Even less well known, however, is a movie called *Writhing Tongue*, from 1980, which is very scary. The plot is about a young girl who develops lockjaw through tetanus. The plot then focuses on the suffering that her parents go through. This might not be considered a traditional Japanese horror movie like *Onibaba*, but the depiction of the onset of the disease is so horrifying that the film is sometimes referred to as 'the Japanese *Exorcist*'!"

Unfortunately, aside from *Tetsuo*, few Japanese genre jaunts were gaining any friction out of their Tokyo hotbed. This changed when the Nineties blossomed and Nakata began to realise his own dreams of big-screen dread with the made-for-video *Kwaidan*-style anthology *Curse, Death & Spirit* (1992) and the unfairly obscure *Don't Look Up* (1996). Following these early efforts, *Ring* – which was adapted from a book by Koji Suzuki and had already been made into a little-known TV movie (airing in 1995) – finally signalled the beginning of a flourishing Japanese fear scene.

The film itself begins with an ominous sequence in which two teenage girls light-heartedly talk about a videotape that is supposed to be haunted: when watched the viewer receives a phone call and a week later is killed by a ghoul-from-beyond-the-grave that emerges from the television set. One of the teens reveals that she actually did see the tape and, more to the point, experienced the same puzzling telephone tyranny afterwards. Unsurprisingly, she is subsequently slaughtered under mysterious circumstances, with a gruelling grimace indicating that whatever took her life was beyond comprehension. *Ring* then turns its attention to a divorced female reporter called Reiko and her young son. Reiko is investigating the cursed videotape and eventually comes upon the item itself. After making the foolhardy decision to view the footage, she receives a phone call and, with seven days left, goes to her ex-husband (played by the iconic character actor Hiroyuki Sanada) for some assistance

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10 ESSENTIAL J-HORROR MOVIES

The 10 Japanese fear flicks you absolutely must see



1. RING

Hideo Nakata, 1998

The original Hideo Nakata-helmed 'video nasty' remains one of the most expertly executed J-horror opuses, with a freaky finale that still packs a paranormal-punch. Pick up *Ring* on DVD for £9.95.



2. TOMIE

Ataru Oikawa, 1999

Not very well known outside Japan, this idiosyncratic character-based creeper has endured, with the latest outing, 2011's *Tomie Unlimited*, swapping spectres for splatter. *Tomie* is available in the Region 1 *Tomie* Collection DVD for £34.51.



3. HYPNOSIS

Masayuki Ochiai, 1999

This obscure oddity begins with images of spontaneous horror taking place across Tokyo (the runner who keeps going with broken legs is especially memorable), and then things get really weird. Pick up *Hypnosis* on DVD for £10.95.



4. UZUMAKI

Higuchinsky, 2000

One of the most unique J-horror epics, *Uzumaki* sees a town 'infected' by spirals which twist and turn humans into broken-boned horrors and snail-like mutations. Out of print, *Uzumaki* can be found used from £6.98 on DVD.



5. SUICIDE CLUB

Shion Sono, 2001

Absolutely nothing is what it seems in this masterpiece of deception and delirium from the great Shion Sono. It's not just one of the best J-horror movies, but one of the finest films of the Noughties. Pick up *Suicide Club* on DVD for £9.47.



6. JU-ON: THE GRUDGE

Takashi Shimizu, 2002

While it is impossible to deny its commercial impact and place in the J-horror pantheon, Shimizu's convoluted plot makes *Ju-On* a movie of interesting ideas, but never delivers any big scares. You can get *Ju-On* on DVD for £2.85.



7. DARK WATER

Hideo Nakata, 2002

This gloomy ghost story represents the peak of J-horror, with a jolting final act that is hard to shake off. Absolutely essential, although the Hollywood rehash is best avoided. *Dark Water* is available on DVD for £5.



8. PREMONITION

Tsuruta Norio, 2004

Reminding audiences that J-horror is at its scariest when dealing with curious curses and unseen evil, *Premonition* is a tightly plotted, fast-paced and extremely tense terror title. Pick it up on DVD for only £6.25.



9. NIGHTMARE DETECTIVE

Shinya Tsukamoto, 2006

Tsukamoto's films avoid easy categorisation, and this is no different. It is available on Italian DVD with English subtitles for £9.99.



10. EXTE: HAIR EXTENSIONS

Shion Sono, 2007

On paper this one sounds too silly to work, but *Exte* gives new meaning to the term 'bad hair day'. You can get it on DVD for £13.12.



More than any other film, *Ring* galvanised J-horror filmmakers.

in untangling the puzzle behind the paranormal presence that is, literally, terrifying the local teens to death.

"The idea of a ghost coming out of the TV is really absurd," laughs Nakata. "When we were filming that sequence I knew that we had to be careful not to be laughed at. When I told people that, at the climax of *Ringu*, the ghost was going to come out from the television set, they would just smile at me because it sounded stupid… but I was careful in terms of creating the tension and the anxiety of fear in the build-up to that scene."

Certainly, the sight of Sadako – the dark-haired horror who emerges, unkempt and broken-nailed, from the white noise of TV sets to destroy whatever dumb denizen has awoken her slumber – quickly became one of the most famous images in macabre movies. Nakata would return to his hit property in 1999 for the disappointing *Ring 2* (further confusing scholars, at the same time as *Ring* a non-Nakata sequel – entitled *Rasen* – was released in cinemas, but proved to be a flop) and would wisely stay clear of 2000's dreary prequel *Ring 0* (aka *Ring: Birthday*).

Meanwhile, another property based on the written word – this time a successful manga comic – called *Tomie* made its debut, and led to no less than eight sequels. As with *Ring*, *Tomie* has an undead damsel (the title character is killed by a high-school thug) returning to the human world to take revenge for her restless state. An effective ending – and plenty of female angst – make *Tomie* worth watching and, although it pales in comparison to the carefully orchestrated anxiety of *Ring*'s densely plotted delirium, both movies maintained one of the recurring facets of the genre: a freaky female phantom.

"As a man, I have to admit it is the women that scare me," laughs Shimizu. "I can't help but point out the resemblance between fear and romance: both are deadly but, somehow, I can't stay away from either."

However, for the true heir to *Ring*'s mix of mystery and spine-tingling torment, you should look to the thoroughly bizarre *Hypnosis* (1999) or the unspeakably odd *Uzumaki* (2000) which, like *Tomie*, also comes from a manga comic, Nakata's own *Dark Water* (2002) and Norio Tsuruta's palpably goosepimple-inducing *Premonition* (2004). Alongside the shocking and subversive *Suicide Club* (2001), these represent arguably the crowning achievement of the entire J-horror era.

"I have great memories of making *Suicide Club*," relates Yoshihiro Nishimura, a well-known special effects artist in Japan who has also directed films of his own (such as 2008's *Tokyo Gore Police*). "It was Shion Sono's first film as a director, and I had a great time making the movie. We did not have a lot of money, but we set out to make something that was truly independent and different. Shion refers to his works as 'rent films' – that is, they are made in order to pay for a roof over his head [laughs] – but I think he has accomplished some great things, and with *Suicide Club* it was his way of making his presence as a director known. And he did that immediately."

Beginning with a group of schoolchildren jumping in front of an underground train in Tokyo, *Suicide Club* subverts the formula established by *Ring* by hinting that a croaky-voiced and potentially otherworldly phonecaller is behind a mass of spontaneous and seemingly unexplainable bouts of mass hari-kari among the urban youth. What follows is a tangled, mind-muddling nightmare that includes a glam rock serial killer cult headed by real-life music star Rolly Teranishi (who sings the standout theme song *Suicide Kiss*), the possible involvement of a young J-pop band, who sport an infectious chart-topping hit, and a brilliantly bewildering balls-out conclusion. Sono would go on to become one of Japanese cinema's most acclaimed filmmakers thanks to the gruelling gangster classic *Cold Fish* (2010) and the sexually subversive *Guilty Of Romance* (2011). However, *Suicide Club* still offers up one of his most delirious dreamscapes.



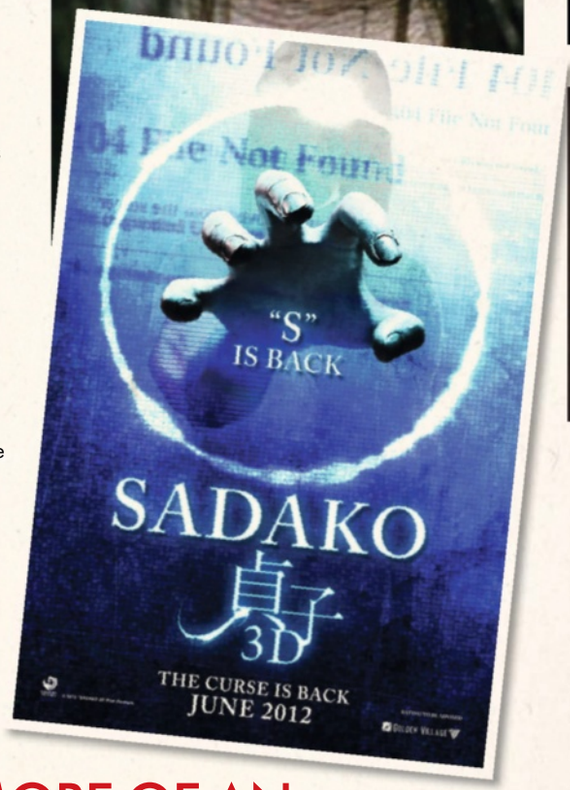
***Nightmare Detective* is a relatively recent high point for the genre.**

Likewise, *Dark Water* – which was remade as a redundant Hollywood romp with Jennifer Connelly in 2005 – sees Nakata improve on *Ring* with a similarly scripted story about a lone parent struggling to contain work and motherhood in the midst of a malevolent threat from an apartment-dwelling entity. The title relates to the 'dark water' that is leaking through the young professional's apartment and leads to a horrible surprise on the top floor. Unlike *Ring*, which is certainly creepy, but plays out more as a 'rollercoaster ride', *Dark Water* is genuinely disturbing, and concludes on a decidedly feel-bad note.

Less appreciated, but almost as permeable, is *Premonition*, which features more family focused threats, this time with a father forewarned by a drifting newspaper page about his child's death on a roadway only seconds before it happens. Three years later, and the luckless parent has hit rock bottom, divorced his wife (who is unconvinced about the 'premonition' and believes her former partner to be insane) and is about to be greeted by another article detailing a future fatality. Upon its critically acclaimed release, *Premonition* indicated that, six years after *Ring*, J-horror was still capable of complex plotting, intense twists and turns and frightful innovation. However, by then, an arguably less interesting film, entitled *Ju-On*, rivalled even *Ring* as the most identifiable face of J-horror.

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"It was designed as a series of 'jumps'" says Shimizu of *Ju-On*, which spawned a successful follow-up in 2002. "The scares are all psychological. I am not really into depicting physical violence. Sometimes I was asked by the producers, 'Maybe you should add some blood in this scene,' but I disagreed. I found that short-sighted. That is not the world I want to create."

Shimizu had studied at the Tokyo Film School under Kiyoshi Kurosawa, who made his own mark in the genre with 2001's stylish, but sluggishly realised, *Kairo* (aka *Pulse*, another one rehashed by Hollywood). With *Ju-On*, the filmmaker fragments his story into six interludes where characters, often confusingly, weave in and out of environments where a past murder 'lingers' in the form of an angry spiritual presence (a dead mother, her equally dead son). The movie's most interesting identity, that of the deceased, black-eyed, pale-skinned little boy, is actually rarely seen, and the entire film is filled with so much exposition that it is a shock Sam Raimi opted to offer Shimizu the chance to remake it (more or less carte blanche) in Hollywood. Amazingly, 2004's American interpretation, *The Grudge* – which wisely kept the Japanese setting and remained relatively faithful to its predecessor – was a smash hit (with box office receipts of almost $200 million) and led to another Shimizu-helmed sequel in 2006. Given that *Ju-On* began life as two straight-to-video shockers (unleashed in 2000) and bearing in the mind the presence of the sub-par indigenous opus *Ju-On: The Grudge 2* (2003), Shimizu has either remade or made sequels his own property on five occasions.

"I originally declined shooting the first remake," admits Shimizu. "But everyone was very thoughtful towards me. Sam Raimi called me 'the father of the franchise,' and insisted that only I could do this movie. But with Hollywood – and I like to use this analogy – I think that I am a car designer. Filmmaking is more of an industrial product in America, rather than a piece of art. When you work in Hollywood you have to make sure that you are creating a movie which can appeal to a universal audience. There is a long tradition of test screenings in America, and that does not interest me so much."

For some onlookers, though, it seemed as if the theatrical triumph of the PG-13-rated American remakes of *The Ring* (2002) and *The Grudge* signalled a new East-to-West license for printing money. Wes Craven, who was originally slated to redo *Kairo*, bemoaned that his werewolf weirdie *Cursed* (2005) had been shorn of its splatter effects to obtain PG-13 approval. "The success of *The Grudge* is what has inspired that thinking," he said at the time. Meanwhile, Nakata himself was perversely asked to perform the task of creating a sequel to the American remake of his own film with 2005's *The Ring Two*.

"Isn't it ironic?" he chuckles. "When I came to Hollywood, I promised myself that I would not make a horror movie as my first American picture because I did not want to put myself into a small box. But then Dreamworks approached me and asked if I would be interested in reading the script to *The Ring Two*. I said 'yes', and that was, to a large extent, because I was desperate for another project. It was really strange that I would be offered the sequel to the remake of my own movie, but the reason I said yes was simply because the script was persuasive and different from my own *Ringu 2*. If it had been similar then I probably wouldn't have done it."

Even in spite of this Tokyo-to-Tinseltown spit-shine on familiar fables, the mid Noughties were probably the point when J-horror began to struggle to find fresh ideas. Certainly, although the occasional anomaly still slipped out, including 2004's hospital-set and convincingly claustrophobic *Infection* (2004) and Kiyoshi Kurosawa's genre-bending detective-ghost

"FILMMAKING IS MORE OF AN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT IN AMERICA, RATHER THAN A PIECE OF ART" TAKASHI SHIMIZU



HONG KONG HORROR

How the island pre-empted J-horror and then learnt from it

Pre-handover, Hong Kong had a famously flourishing film industry that wasn't afraid to push the boundaries of accepted generic structures (now playing to the lucrative Chinese mainland, movie censorship has become a growing problem), hence, the popularity of Jackie Chan's consistently surprising kung-fu comedies and the later heroic bloodshed blockbusters from John Woo and Tsui Hark. Horror-wise, the Shaw Brothers launched a small cottage industry with films such as *Ghost Eyes* (1974) and *Hex* (1980), which doubtlessly assisted in the establishment of the J-horror formula. For instance, *Ghost Eyes* – about a woman who is possessed by way of contact lenses and suffers from consequent ghastly hallucinations – acts as the obvious template for the later Hong Kong horror hit *The Eye* (2002). While many of the country's greatest achievements in supernatural excess veer towards kung-fu craziness – including the magnificent *Mr Vampire* (1985) and the irresistible *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) – the popularity of *Ring* certainly registered in Asia's most Anglicised area.

Indeed, indicative of the influence that Hideo Nakata and chums were having is 2002's *Inner Senses*, the last film to feature the legendary Leslie Cheung. This is a superior suspense thriller about extrasensory encounters, made all the more moving by the fact it deals with a woman (played by Karena Lam, star of the slasher-sickie *Koma*) whose ghoulish 'hallucinations' are driving her to madness. Cheung – one of Asia's biggest cinematic draws – unfortunately took his own life shortly after completing the film. Although Hong Kong horror often concentrates on more grounded 'mad killer' scenarios (see 1993's *The Untold Story*, 2004's *Dumplings* and 2010's *Dream Home*), *Ring*-motivated mayhem is also present in *The Closet* (2007) and *Dead Air* (2007), as well as the 3D disaster *The Park* (2003). Considerably creepier is the in-name-only-sequel *The Eye 2*, starring the gorgeous erstwhile softcore porn actress Shu Qi as a pregnant woman plagued by a poltergeist who is determined to inhabit her unborn child. Directors Danny and Oxide Pang were less lucky with the flop third instalment, *The Eye: Infinity* (2005), and 2010's *The Child's Eye*, a flimsy 3D opus which indicated that many filmmakers were finding fresh ideas for a familiar formula a tough nut to crack.

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As well as spawning numerous sequels, ***Ring*** also starred future ***The Wolverine*** actor Hiroyuki Sanada.



Hideo Nakata followed up ***Ring*** with the equally impressive ***Dark Water.***



story *Retribution* (2006), far too many of the films were rehashing the same old stories. Point in case is Takashi Miike's surprising entry into the phantom-female trend with 2003's *One Missed Call*, a visually vibrant slice of horror hokum, but one that owes way too much to Nakata's *Ring* series to the extent that every eerie event can be predicted at least five minutes beforehand. Likely hoping that lightning would strike twice, Hollywood executives earmarked the sub-par *One Missed Call* for an equally dreary 2008 American remake that few people probably even remember being released. Miike made his own, badly received, indigenous sequel in 2005, and bowed out for *One Missed Call: Final* (2006), which was instigated by erstwhile TV director Manabu Asô.

"I think that *Ju-On* represented the beginning of the end of the J-horror genre," states Yamaguchi. "After that I felt that the genre was more or less exhausted of interesting ideas. My feeling is that Takashi Shimizu took the ghost film as far as it could go, and it was difficult to top that. I enjoyed the Kiyoshi Kurosawa movies too, but I think every horror genre exhausts itself after a while."

Certainly, Shimizu's attempts to follow up the success of *The Grudge* were mixed. 2004's *Marebito* is minimalist but interesting, telling of a cameraman (played by *Tetsuo*'s Shinya Tsukamoto) obsessed with images of terror who gets more than he bargained for after stumbling upon a strange and stranded female, while 2005's flaccid film about filmmakers, *Reincarnation*, added a postmodern spin to familiar setups. However, neither captured the audience – or imagination – that *Ju-On* had, while Shimizu's more recent *Shock Labyrinth* (2009) and 2011's *Tormented* (aka *Rabbit Horror 3D*) are both meandering messes. The director's most successful series continued in Japan with *Ju-On: White Ghost* and *Ju-On: Black Ghost* (both 2009, released on UK DVD in 2010) but neither offered anything new. Unfortunately, Nakata, once deemed to be Japan's future of fear, has not fared much better, following up his *Dark Water* triumph with one disappointment after another, climaxing in *Chatroom* (2010) and *The Complex* (2013).

One of the last great gasps of innovation, meanwhile, came from Shinya Tsukamoto with *Nightmare Detective* (2006). Having already defined his approach with the *Tetsuo* films and the likes of *Tokyo Fist* (1995), *Nightmare Detective* sees Tsukamoto mould slasher lacerations with his trademark hand-held shaky-cam style and elements of J-horror's supernatural lineage to flawed, but nevertheless fascinating, effect.

On the other hand, of the early J-horror elite, only Shion Sono has kept up a permeable profile, with his 2007 oddity *Exte: Hair Extensions* being one of the most imaginative, and admirably bizarre, late-in-the-day additions to the genre. Featuring actress Chiaki Kuriyama (from *Battle Royale* and *Kill Bill*) as a hairdresser terrorised by locks of living, lethal tresses, Sono would soon leave the scary movie game behind for the more personal likes of *Love Exposure* (2008). Ultimately, though, as the Noughties came to a close, Japanese horror came to be defined less by poltergeists and more by excessive plasma-spillage, as evidenced in the cheaply made but perplexingly popular likes of *The Machine Girl*, *RoboGeisha*, *Samurai Princess* (2009), *Deadball* (2011) and many other bouts of blood-caked banality.

Yet, there are strong indications that Japan might still be looking to the past for its big-screen bogey-women. The recent *Sadako 3D* (2012) initiated a cash-cribbing re-launch of the *Ring* franchise, and spawned a sequel of its own. Also gaining acclaim in 2013 was *It's A Beautiful Day*, which promised another supernatural story with its foot firmly placed in the 'ghosts' of time's past. Meanwhile, the found-footage approach belatedly made it to J-horror with 2012's *POV: Norowareta Film* and 2010's *Paranormal Activity 2: Tokyo Night*, a Japanese-sanctioned sequel to the Hollywood hit that made massive money in its host nation, even surpassing the grosses of its American inspiration. Although these films may not have made it to the UK, the fact remains that while J-horror might never reach its early Noughties high point again, the home-grown hunger for things that go bump in the night is far from sated.



THAI HORROR

How Thailand crawled out from under the J-horror shadow

South-east Asia's most-visited tourist destination has a burgeoning horror film business, although only the most dedicated of fright fans in the West have probably gotten their feet wet. This is unfortunate, because when *Ring* proved to be a box office juggernaut in Bangkok, it wasn't long before Thai-terror became a fixture of local theatres.

The most famous of them is *Shutter* (2004), a technically accomplished 'spectre-takes-revenge' outing that at the time of its release felt a bit too much like *Ring* and *Ju-On* to stand out. That said, Hollywood was impressed enough to remake it in 2008, and – unlike its Japanese and Korean counterparts – *Shutter* leans more towards a critique of masculinity than focusing on the same 'fearful female' thematic (in the end, the otherworldly oestrogen is shown to be 'good').

Utilising that old J-horror facet, the phone, as an item of fear is *999-9999* (2002), which sees a new student at a high school possibly involved in a nonsensical call-back number and a bevy of bereavements. This is obviously very *Ring*-inspired, but it is also suspenseful and slick. Likewise, the brilliantly bonkers *13: Game Of Death* (2006) sees a Bangkok everyman pestered by phone calls promising him wealth if he completes a series of sick tasks. Be afraid: an American remake is promised.

Less interesting is anthology film *Three* (2002), the somewhat staid *Omen* (2003) and *Ghost Of Mae Nak* (2005), a nice-looking bore-and-a-half from British filmmaker Mark Duffield. More recently, the Pang brothers, who worked on 2001's boring *Bangkok Haunted* prior to their success with *The Eye* films, returned to their native land for the intriguing *Re-cycle* (2006). In addition, those who enjoy the formula popularised by Nakata and Takashi Shimizu could do worse than the easy-going fright fable *Alone* (2007), which features a fantastic turn from its alluring leading actress and erstwhile pop heroine Marsha Wattanapanich, swept up in theatres throughout Asia. Even more recently, the likes of 2008's twosome of *Coming Soon* and *4Bia*, 2009's *My Ex* (which spawned a 2010 sequel) and 2012's massive money-maker, the high-concept 3D film *Dark Flight*, highlight Thailand's dedication to experimenting with J-horror's spectre-based bombast.

If this lot whets your appetite, the rest of South-east Asia is no slouch in scary movie-making either, with Singapore's *The Maid* (2005), Vietnam's *Muoi: The Legend Of A Portrait* (2007), Filipino frightener *The Healing* (2012), a blockbuster hit in its home nation, and Indonesia's similarly successful *308* (2013) leading the way of horror in hot weather.



FLASHBACK

GREMLINS TURNS 30

HOW COULD A TEAM-UP OF STEVEN SPIELBERG, CHRIS COLUMBUS AND JOE DANTE RESULT IN ANYTHING OTHER THAN ONE OF THE DEFINITIVE FEEL-GOOD FANTASY MOVIES OF THE EIGHTIES? YOU LAUGHED, SCREAMED AND AWW-ED, AND NOW WE CATCH UP WITH THE CAST AND CREATORS OF GREMLINS 30 YEARS ON…

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

"It was kind of like a huge practical joke played on the audience. For 45 minutes they were lulled into thinking it was *ET 2*, then suddenly when everyone was relaxed it freaked them out… or rather, Joe Dante freaked them out!"

Zach Galligan is talking about the ingeniously deceptive concept of *Gremlins*, in which he played Billy Peltzer, the shy teen who goes up against the terrorising offspring of his impossibly cute Mogwai (meaning 'devil monster' in Cantonese) Christmas present 'Gizmo' in the comedy classic that is indeed one half a cuddly, delightfully festive caper and the other a devilishly twisted creature feature.

"Nowadays, people kind of enjoy that subversive sensibility, when at the time it was like 'what is this? This is just wrong! I thought I was coming to see a fluffy cute creature movie!'" continues Galligan.

It all gestated (quite literally) in Chris Columbus' New York loft. The young, struggling scribe, who would go on to write the screenplay for enjoyably energetic Eighties teen adventure *The Goonies* and direct the first two *Home Alone* and *Harry Potter* outings, needed to prove himself, and was inspired by the unnerving sounds of scavenging rodents that plagued his attic late at night. Penning a spec script to prove his ability, the resulting concept landed on the lap of Steven Spielberg, who quickly realised its motion picture potential and passed it on to pal Joe Dante, who had a modest hit a couple of years earlier with horror comedy *The Howling*.

With that film's producer, Michael Finnell (who was also involved with hit parody *Airplane!*) on board, Spielberg took the project to Warner Bros and co-produced the film as Amblin Entertainment's third feature, following the tremendous success of *ET*. After some considerable script revisions to tone down some of the more horrific elements in the story (more of which later), attention turned to casting the two likeable teenage leads that would help humanise proceedings.

> "ALL SORTS OF HORRIBLE THINGS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPENING, WITH THE GREMLINS BECOMING SUPER VIOLENT AND HEADS BOUNCING DOWN THE STAIRS"
> ZACH GALLIGAN

Fresh off the sleeper success of coming-of-age comedy *Fast Times At Ridgemont High*, Phoebe Cates was cast as sweet-natured love interest Kate Beringer, while the search was on for someone to embody geeky teen Billy. In a part that was auditioned by practically every major young acting talent at the time – including, but not limited to Kevin Bacon, Judd Nelson, Emilio Estevez and Karate Kid Ralph Macchio – newcomer Galligan landed the lead thanks to some crucial chemistry with Cates.

"It was actually one of the easier parts I ever got," recalls Galligan. "We only read one scene where we're on a date and at the end, I don't know why I did it, but I put my head on her shoulder… then a day or two later I got the part. When I finally did the movie I asked Joe Dante what I did to land it, and he said, 'Steven saw the tape, and when you put your head on Phoebe's shoulder he said 'Oh my God, the guy is in love with her already – I don't need to see anymore!'"

It was a role that the then 19-year old could also relate to. "I was the guy at the sixth grade dance who would go up and ask pretty girls to dance, and they would reject me and go with the cute guy," reveals Galligan. "I certainly knew what it was like to be kind of the loner who collected comic-books and did drawings – I totally identified!"

Perhaps something the actor took longer to identify with was the daunting prospect of playing the lead in a major Spielberg production. "I was too young and stupid to realise, but once I got a tour of the sets, looked at the schedule and realised I was working 71 out of 75 shooting days, I thought to myself, 'Holy cow, this whole movie is just me and Gizmo!' Then I would have mini panic attacks in the mornings: I'd wake up and realise I have this day ahead of me, then freeze in bed and think, 'There's



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BEHIND THE NEW BATCH

What star Zack Galligan really thought of Gremlins 2

Due in part to director Joe Dante's reluctance to repeat himself, it took six years for a sequel to *Gremlins* to surface. Whether you think it was worth the wait depends on your taste for the satirical, as *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* has it in shedloads.

"To this day it's hard to see a sequel that mocks the first one so completely," reflects Zach Galligan who, along with Phoebe Cates, reprised their roles for *The New Batch*. "Usually, the second one tries to continue or expand on the first one, while this tried to tear it to shreds and show up everything that was wrong with it and all its inconsistencies."

An unusual tactic for a follow up indeed, this New York tower-block-confined sequel spoofed the time zone implausibility of the 'never feed them after midnight' Mogwai rules, poked fun at all the titular merchandising and even comically cut off Cates during a potentially heartfelt follow-up to her iconic 'Santa Claus isn't real' monologue (a deliberate dig at the producers, who wanted to cut that scene from the original).

Sir Christopher Lee plays a Dr Frankenstein-type mad scientist, John Glover is surprisingly sympathetic as a sentimental version of Donald Trump, while a psychoanalytical Gremlin sounds, well, intellectually stimulating. Throw in a limitless array of cinematic in-jokes and pop-culture satire, and what you have is a less violent and more self-conscious outing that was a box-office disappointment, but remains an audacious sequel that was far ahead of its time.





Actor Zach Galligan has fond memories of working on *Gremlins*.



Some were fooled into believing *Gremlins* was a sweet, cuddly tale.

no way I can do this!' But by the time I'd woken up, taken a shower and gotten dressed I had calmed down. Then, by the time I got into work I went in with confidence."

It certainly helped that the actors playing Galligan's parents, the late country singer Hoyt Axton and character actress Frances Lee McCain, weren't major stars. "There were a lot of great actors, but there wasn't really a huge intimidating star," considers Galligan. "[Randall] was supposed to be played by Dick Van Dyke, but he had a scheduling conflict. If Dick Van Dyke was my dad I probably would have lost my shit, because I grew up watching *Mary Poppins*! I actually think it turned out a lot better with someone like Hoyt who had an 'Oh *shirks*, I'm just another guy from Oklahoma' kind of vibe about him."

A less loveable character was larger-than-life town scrooge Mrs Deagle, played by soft-spoken, Southern-toned actress Polly Holliday. "When I first got the script it said 'Mrs Deagle: the meanest woman in town!'" recalls the actress who embodied the ice-cold creation. "It was sort of based on Margaret Hamilton in *The Wizard Of Oz*, and that's sort of where the character was coming from… you wouldn't want to spend time with her; she was just an unpleasant woman."

The similarities with the original Wicked Witch of the West continued all the way to the character's



The Gremlins were originally intended to be even more brutal, and with carnivorous tendencies.

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SPIELBERG VS THE CENSORS

How the father of feel-good flicks changed the rules



The microwave scene led to the creation of the PG-13 rating in the US.

What has a Gremlin melting in a microwave and a beating heart in a hand got in common? Answer: they're both too graphic-for-the-time moments in Spielberg films that were responsible for the creation of the PG-13 certificate in the US.

The sacrificial beating heart sequence from *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* momentarily etched the archeologist adventure into horror territory, while the microwaved Gremlin was the point of juncture where Dante's cute and cuddly film suddenly turned nasty.

An uproar occurred when parents took their kids to see PG-rated productions and these scenes of graphic carnage occurred, prompting them to argue for more parental guidance in the form of an R-rated stamp. Spielberg disagreed, but offered a compromise: as there was no middle ground between a PG (which grouped together infants aged up to 17) and R-rating (which required parents to accompany children under 17), why not create one?

Spielberg suggested the PG-13 certificate, which was approved by the Motion Picture Association of America. This led to *Red Dawn*, John Milius' 1984 action adventure, becoming the debut PG-13 movie, and a subsequent influx of kiddy-themed films containing slightly edgier content.

memorable demise courtesy of a malfunctioning stairlift that thrusts her through her top story window, a sequence Holliday even had some creative input into. "I told Joe Dante, 'Wouldn't it be funny if I had on these little booties and you see my feet sticking out of the snow bank the way Margaret Hamilton was sticking out from underneath the house in *The Wizard Of Oz*?' So he put it in there!"

If you thought Mrs Deagle was a force to be reckoned with, nothing prepared audiences for the real monsters of the show. "The directives for the Gremlins' design were straightforward: 'Make 'em real scary,'" says Oscar-winning FX maestro Chris Walas, who was tasked with creating the titular creatures whose design phrase altered as the production developed. "The original story was a straight horror tale, so the preliminary designs were more realistic," he continues. "The Mogwai had to be cute and cuddly, [but] I wanted to make sure that once they turned to Gremlins the audience still felt the biological connection in the design. The Gremlins in many ways are the reverse of the Mogwai: where the Mogwai were soft and furry, the Gremlins were scaly and toothy. I always viewed them as two phases of childhood: the sweet, cute baby phase and the troublemaking, getting-into-everything toddler phase."



The original script differed considerably, with Gizmo actually turning into a Gremlin instead of giving birth to them. It was Spielberg who thought Gizmo was too cute a character for this to happen to, so the concept of two separate entities was designed, dramatically altering the tone of the film.

"All sorts of horrible things were supposed to be happening," adds Galligan, "with the Gremlins becoming super violent and heads bouncing down the stairs… Spielberg got involved and said, ' We're gonna put the breaks on that right now!'" Indeed, the decapitated head that the actor refers to was in fact supposed to be his on-screen mother, who loses it in a fight with the creatures. In addition to this, the Gremlins were originally intended to eat Billy's faithful canine companion Barney and, in probably one of the most audacious unrealised sequences, the Gremlins attack a branch of McDonalds, discarding the burgers but eating the customers!

Toning down the on-screen onslaught didn't reduce the amount of technical problems the production faced, however, particularly concerning the mechanics of our furry friend. "When it went well it was great, and when things broke down it meant there were tremendous delays," reveals Galligan about Gizmo. "The springs would snap, we would recognise the sound of it breaking, and Chris Walas would come over, look at it and say, 'Looks like about six or seven hours,' so we would go off to Spielberg's office and play videogames!"

Walas recalls the challenges he and his technical team faced with the ever-changing production. "There were a lot of intricate puppets in the show, and they weren't just in a few scenes; they were in a lot of the movie, so there were invariably a lot of cables popping and radio control interference that plagued us," he says. "The continual changes in the action also put the puppets through a lot of unplanned, spontaneous actions, which was a real strain on them, so maintenance was a huge ongoing job."

Part of the challenge was keeping up with Dante's enthusiastic creative spontaneity. "Once Joe saw what might be possible with the puppets, he really got creative with the gags. That worked fantastically for the film, but was a continual challenge for me and my crew to keep up with," admits Walas.

Galligan recalls how Dante's editing background (he co-edited his previous horror features *Piranha* and *The Howling* with Mark Goldblatt) aided the filmmaker with an extraordinary ability to envision the film as he shot it.

"WE DIDN'T THINK THE MICROWAVE WOULD EVER BE IN THE MOVIE, SO WE WENT WHOLE HOG ON IT… IT WAS A LOT OF YUCK" CHRIS WALAS

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FLASHBACK

GREMLINS TURNS 30



Actress Frances Lee McCain bore the brunt of the Gremlins' assault.

"EVERY TIME GIZMO BROKE WE WOULD GO OFF TO SPIELBERG'S OFFICE AND PLAY VIDEOGAMES" ZACH GALLIGAN







As with many classics, the prospect of a possible remake is never far away.

"He was really fun to work with because he was always cutting the movie in his head, editing it as he went along," he says. "So it was cool to work with someone who pretty much knew exactly what the movie looked like before he even shot it!"

Arguably one of the most memorable set pieces in the movie is the home invasion scene, where Mrs Peltzer goes to battle with the creatures in her kitchen using any means at her disposal, the home blender and microwave becoming particularly beneficial and leading to some truly gruesome moments.

"Even when we were doing it, we all thought the microwave gag might be a bit over the top," reveals Walas about the eye-opening scene where a Gremlin explodes in the microwave. "We really didn't think the shot would ever be in the movie, so we went whole hog on it… it was a lot of yuck, and the whole interior of the microwave was covered in the mess. The entire crew groaned horribly when we shot it!"

The scene in question was partially responsible for the creation of the PG-13 certificate (see boxout), while US critic Leonard Maltin fiercely disapproved of the violence and mayhem caused by the Gremlins, landing him a tongue-in-cheek cameo in the satirised sequel where he repeats his criticisms and is subsequently attacked by the creatures as a result.

Gremlins also contained some classic non-violent comedic moments, particularly involving the malfunctioning of Peltzer senior's inventions, usually at the expense of Peltzer Jr. "We only did two or three takes of the [orange juicer scene] because I literally had to get in the shower after each take… that thing blasted me with so much orange juice it would take ten minutes for them to comb the pulp out of my hair!" Galligan recalls. "The scene you see in the film is the last one shot. I'm trying to keep it together – it's just too funny!"

Controversially, it was the lighter elements of *Gremlins* that were pushed during the ad campaign. One particular trailer focused entirely on Gizmo and completely overlooked the titular creatures in an attempt to plug a much softer film that would appeal to the family friendly likes of *ET*. But it looks like it wasn't just

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The Gremlins would return six years later for sequel *The New Batch*.

the audience who were tricked into thinking this was a cute and cuddly comedy. "I must admit, when I read the script I thought it was going to be charming," remembers Holliday. "So I was surprised it turned out to be so scary and horrible… you work on things and you never quite know."

On 8 June 1984, *Gremlins* premiered in US cinemas on the same day as the equally comedy horror-themed *Ghostbusters*, ranking second behind that film in its first weekend and becoming the fourth-highest grossing film of that year. But perhaps most impressive is how *Gremlins* was tailored to appeal to a broader international audience, with Gizmo's dialogue (voiced primarily by Howie Mandel) recorded in different languages that included jokes and cultural references specific to different countries.

This was also the beginning of the popular Eighties era of comedy horror, where earlier films like *The Howling* and later Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* masterfully blended genres to hilariously zany effect. But *Gremlins* stands out thanks to its picture-postcard setting and nostalgic admiration for old classic family movies like *The Wizard Of Oz* and Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*, a clip of which features early in the film.

"Behind the nasty mischief of the film lies a warm and heartfelt love of the subject matter," considers Walas. "I think that's something that audiences appreciate, and even love about the film. It also finds a perfect blend of horror and comedy, of cute and fuzzy as well as mean and nasty."

"It was a horror movie, but it was full of funny things," muses Holliday. "You knew you were watching a movie, and that the characters in it were sort of tongue-in-cheek. It was a charming movie in a way, and then utterly scary."

For Galligan it was the timeless quality of the film that appealed to him, except for one minor detail, perhaps. "I remember thinking at the time that there wasn't a lot that kind of identified it as an Eighties movie, and I think it holds up because it doesn't have a lot of the Eighties in it, except maybe my hair!" he laughs, referring to his dated on-screen curls.

A somewhat belated, satirical sequel followed in 1990 (see boxout), but in more recent times talk has turned to the inevitable remake. "I think it's logical, but I haven't seen anything, so it's just a blank canvas at the moment," continues Galligan. "I think if they're smart they'll at least do animatronics for Gizmo and maybe CGI on some of the other things."

Walas is skeptical regarding the prospect of regurgitating Dante's classic. "I'm not sure how an update would work, and more importantly I don't know how feasible it is to hit that delicate balance of horror, comedy and heart that Joe managed," he adds. "I know that CGI is the way things are done these days, but I think the fact that we used puppets allowed the audience to accept the fantasy level of the film. I'd hate to see the Gremlins redone as pure CGI, simply because I think they would lose a lot of their uniqueness."

From its cozy Christmas town setting, groundbreaking puppetry, charming characterisation, magical comedic touches and subtle shift in tone to horror film territory, *Gremlins* remains an undisputable festive favourite 30 years on, and a formula that should remain pretty hard to duplicate.



Gremlins is available to purchase now on Blu-ray.

MOM AND POP SCARE



Frances Lee McCain talks about doing battle with those nasty Gremlins

You had a very natural quality as Billy's mother in *Gremlins*. What did you try to bring to the role?
Joe is not a director who, at least in this film, delves much into character analysis – frankly, when you're doing an essentially broad-stroke comic-book style of film, that would be pretty tedious! What he did convey, and I tried to live up to, was a wife and mother who loved her husband and son in spite of their foibles, who was happy with her lot in life and content to let her loved ones be who they were. However, she might worry about the future, and therefore – in my mind – a woman who could turn into a fierce protectress when circumstances called for it!

What was it like filming the home confrontation scene?
The throwing of the plates, particularly as I used the TV tray as a shield, was a bit of a nightmare. Because of filmic angles I had to yell and advance on an imaginary Gremlin, not on the fellow off-camera who was throwing plates at me. So I couldn't look directly at where the plates were coming from, which made for some dicey moments for both the guy throwing the plates and me! I thought [microwaving the Gremlin] was brilliant, as it portrayed a popular urban myth of the time, with lots of stories of cats blown up in microwaves.

And being attacked by a Christmas Tree?
Filming those scenes were a real hoot for us all, in spite of trying to work out the technicalities. The fight with the Christmas tree was especially hilarious as I recall, with a puppet attached to my neck while I did all the work of thrashing about to make it look real. Also, we filmed the moment when I approach the kitchen (after turning off the record player) in reverse, so to speak, where I had to start by peering into the kitchen and then pull back. In the film itself that piece actually runs backwards, so it looks as though I gather courage and then peer into the kitchen. I remember those sequences quite fondly as days of great collaboration, lots of laughter amid the problem solving, and a sense of accomplishment when we felt we'd got things right.



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THE LORD OF WARHAMMER

The art of Ian Miller

With his towering cityscapes and gothic monsters, artist Ian Miller has been at the heart of modern fantasy illustration, from Ralph Bakshi to Games Workshop…

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



HORDES OF CHAOS

***Warhammer*'s cosmology quickly began to set it apart from its stock fantasy influences, and Miller's depiction of the dripping, oozing Chaos Gods towering over their dread armies in the two *Realm Of Chaos* sourcebooks set the tone.**

Released in 1988, *Slaves To Darkness* and *The Lost And The Damned* radically redefined the fantasy wargame, taking it into baroque new territory. Both books now go for fantastic sums on eBay, with *The Lost And The Damned* fetching up to £120.

WWW.SCIFINOW.CO.UK



PANORAMA OF ROBOTS

Unsurprisingly, Miller's gift for beautifully designed and arresting tableaus has led to his being in demand as an artist for record covers. These monstrous, skeletal robot warriors are a recent creation, but are part of a longer obsession.

"This was created as a wraparound image for a 12-inch record cover for the London band XM-3a (The working title is *A Darkling Plain*. It is due in July/August this year). The robotic elements were drawn then scanned in and manipulated in Photoshop. It was great fun to do."



BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD

This powerful interior illustration for fan-favourite *Warhammer* sourcebook *Realm Of Chaos: Slaves To Darkness* helped define Khorne, the Chaos God of blood in Miller's menacing detail.



CHAOS WARRIOR

Another *Realm Of Chaos* illustration, this time showing a ferocious orc warrior in the thrall of *Warhammer*'s dark gods.

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GALLERY

THE ART OF IAN MILLER



RED DRAGON

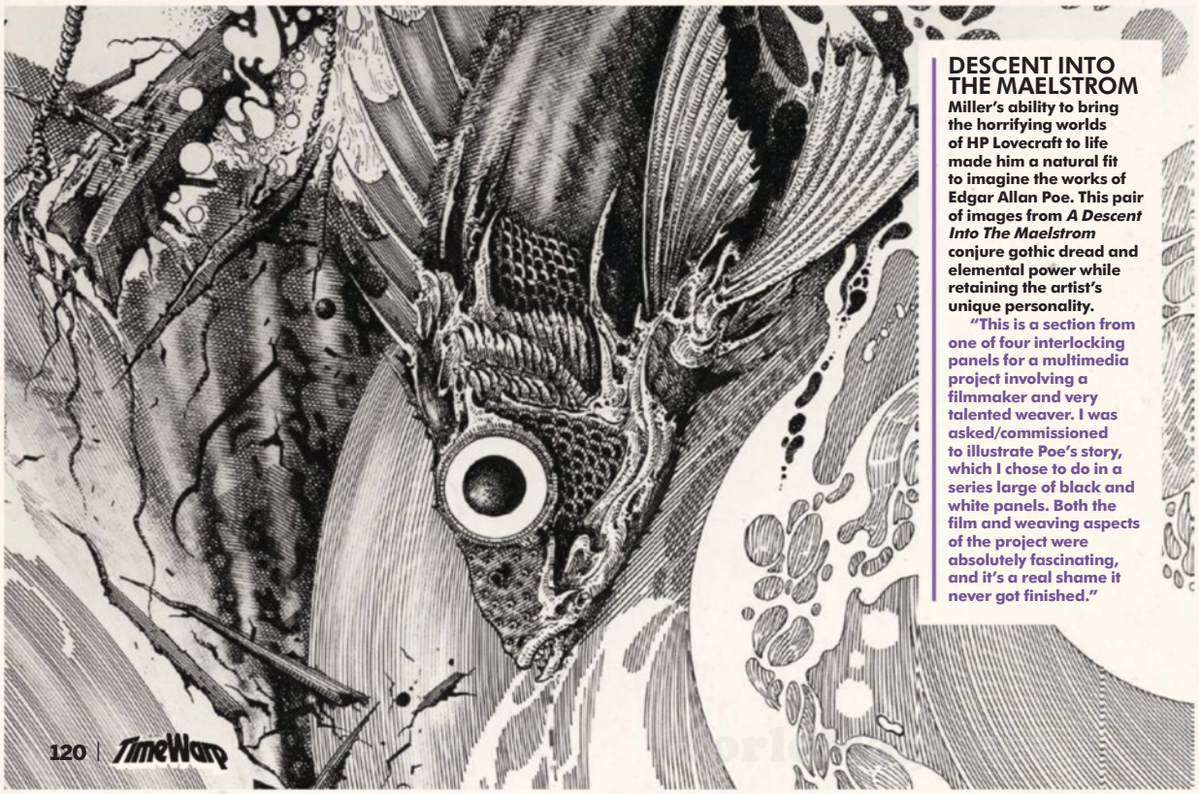
"This is one in a series of red dragons commissioned by an Italian patron in 2013. He loves dragons. I think it's the pattern-making involved in these images that appeals the most, and they are always fun to do."





MORE FROM THE MAELSTROM

"This is another section from one of the four large panels mentioned earlier. I was very much concerned with trying to capture and project a sense of movement and the immense gyrating power of the maelstrom as it sucked down those objects caught in its sway."



DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTROM

Miller's ability to bring the horrifying worlds of HP Lovecraft to life made him a natural fit to imagine the works of Edgar Allan Poe. This pair of images from *A Descent Into The Maelstrom* conjure gothic dread and elemental power while retaining the artist's unique personality.

"This is a section from one of four interlocking panels for a multimedia project involving a filmmaker and very talented weaver. I was asked/commissioned to illustrate Poe's story, which I chose to do in a series large of black and white panels. Both the film and weaving aspects of the project were absolutely fascinating, and it's a real shame it never got finished."



DARK CITADEL

The sprawling, gothic cityscapes of Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* proved to be an inspiration to Miller, who began his career in the early Seventies creating illustrations for book jackets, including several HP Lovecraft collections.

"This is the second in a series of castle images using technical pens and wash-on illustration board. For some reason I can't stop drawing castles.

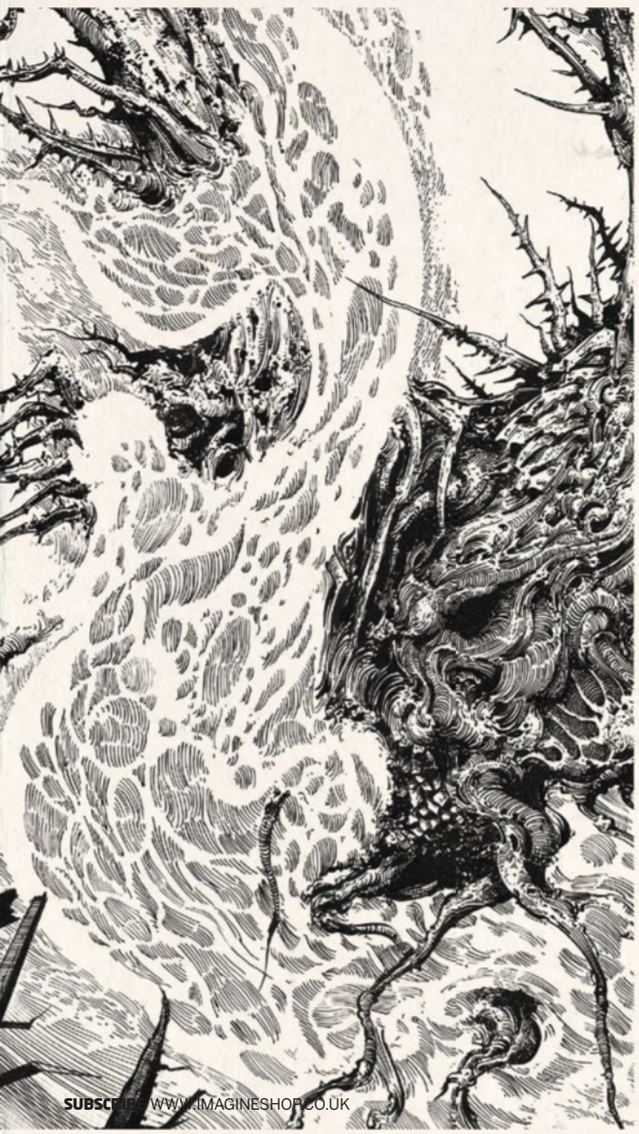
"It started with a drawing I did of *Gormenghast* back in the Seventies. Six versions on and several 'After Gormenghasts', and I am still trying to capture the essence and magic of Mervyn Peake's castlescape. M John Harrison's *Viriconium* only enforced this obsession."



CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

Miller's work took him to San Francisco, where he was hired by visionary filmmaker Ralph Bakshi to work on his film *Wizards*. Looking at this, with its beautifully detailed anthromorphised animals and beguiling landscape, it's easy to see why Bakshi saw a kindred spirit.

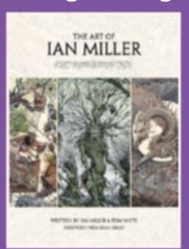
"This is one of several commissions for a patron in New Jersey. The brief was something musical with lots of whimsy; nothing sharp or nasty. This is the free-fall image that evolved. It was immensely fun to do, and is another ongoing series inside my head."





FANTASY ARTIST

Poring over the art of Ian Miller is like rolling for magic items



Ian Miller's career as a fantasy artist has taken him from paperback dustcovers to the big screen, and art galleries to album covers. He's worked on Ralph Bakshi's *Cool World* and Dreamworks' *Shrek*, given designs to Dave McKean for *MirrorMask*, provided covers for David Day's books on JRR Tolkien and created the artwork for a huge number of Games Workshop's earliest *Warhammer* sourcebooks. He's perhaps most fondly remembered, however, for his work on the beloved *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook series, having created the covers for *Creature Of Havoc* and *The Citadel Of Chaos*.

His beautifully detailed artwork blends gothic horror, gloriously baroque detail, surrealist humour and some fantastically rendered fantasy creatures that bring these complex, alien and fantastical worlds to life. His covers for everything from HP Lovecraft paperbacks to *Magic: The Gathering* game cards ensured that generations of fantasy lovers have imagined these worlds through his eyes.

For more information on Ian Miller, visit his website: www.ian-miller.org. *The Art Of Ian Miller* will be released on 25 March, and is available for £24.99

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IN 1997, PAUL VERHOEVEN TOOK A CONTROVERSIAL BOOK AND TURNED IT INTO A SATIRE DISGUISED AS AN ACTION MOVIE. JOIN US AS WE SHIP OUT TO KLENDATHU TO REMEMBER THE FILM THAT DELIVERED BRAIN BUGS, MICHAEL IRONSIDE AND RICO'S ROUGHNECKS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

STARSHIP TROOPERS



Film

RUNNING TIME: 129 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 7 November 1997
DIRECTOR: Paul Verhoeven
WRITER: Edward Neumeier
CAST: Casper Van Dien, Denise Richards, Dina Meyer, Michael Ironside, Jake Busey

About

The Global Federation is at war with the bug planet of Klendathu. Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien) wants to join the military to impress his girlfriend Carmen (Denise Richards), but soon discovers a new strength of purpose after the bugs destroy his hometown. Johnny ships out with the Mobile Infantry, but it soon becomes clear that this isn't going to be an easy fight. Under the guidance of teacher-turned-leader Jean Rasczak (Michael Ironside), Johnny leapfrogs through the ranks as the human race fights for survival.

***Starship Troopers* didn't look like a clever film.** With its clunky dialogue, plastic actors and taglines like "Mankind just became an endangered species", it looked like a big, loud and brash B-movie that would prioritise special effects and cheesy one-liners over anything as interesting as subtext or satire. As it turned out, that impression was wrong.

Instead, *Starship Troopers* is a witty triumph, being both gloriously over the top and wickedly satirical. It's hard to think of another slice of big-budget action sci-fi that could get away with taking shots directly from Leni Riefenstahl's *The Triumph Of The Will* and placing them into a newsreel segment encouraging youngsters to embrace their civic duty and join the armed forces.

The film is based on Robert A Heinlein's novel, which had become increasingly controversial due to its glorification of the soldiering life, frequently coming in for accusations of militarism. It's worth noting that Heinlein countered that he was glorifying the work and sacrifices made by these grunts, although the book has also been accused of racism and fascism.

With every passing year, Paul Verhoeven's reputation as one of the most irreverent and intelligent filmmakers to bring science fiction to the big screen grows more and more impressive. Every rewatch of *RoboCop* confirms just how funny, sly and timeless the film is, but at the time of *Starship Troopers* his star had lost some of its lustre. The director had followed the provocative leg-crossing of *Basic Instinct* with the Razzie-magnet softcore gyrating of *Showgirls*, and it was high time that he found his way back to his best.

In much the same way that the 'I'd buy that for a dollar' future depicted in *RoboCop* looks more and more familiar every day, *Starship Troopers*' subversion of all-American values and wartime propaganda refuses to date. Some of the effects are starting to look a bit ropey (the spaceships in particular look more and more like cardboard boxes), but the sly wit hasn't dulled.

"ITS SUBVERSION OF AMERICAN VALUES AND WARTIME PROPAGANDA REFUSES TO DATE"

That wit is given free reign in the film's newsreel segments, which serve to break up the story (such as it is) and provide a broader worldview of the current state – at least the way the state wants you to see it. It's a world in which soldiers are beaming Adonises, children step on cockroaches to do their part and everyone is encouraged to join up and guarantee their citizenship. It's here that Verhoeven slips his Reifenstahl shot in, as the armed forces recruitment shows the glory and physical perfection that can be attained alongside your citizenship if you join up. Meanwhile, we get quick glimpses of how society functions outside the armed forces as the newsreader gives us a crime and punishment update. "A murderer was captured this morning and tried today. Execution tonight at six. All net, all channels. Would you like to know more?"

It's also in these newsreels that Verhoeven gives the audience nods to remind them that conflict is never one-sided. We're told that some believe the bugs attacked Buenos Aires because of human interference (an idea quickly dispelled by an outraged Rico), while the idea that these monsters could have anything resembling intelligence is dismissed as ridiculous or offensive. The director has never been shy about depicting violence in all its gory glory, but the film's final minutes see the Brain Bug cowering outside its cave as Neil Patrick Harris' telepath Carl declares "It's scared! It's scared!" to cheers from the assembled troops. Finally, we see various horrifying instruments being rammed into the beast's exposed sides and terrified face as a 'Censored' bar covers the entry wound, and nothing else.

The characters' determination to put their life on the line for their country (or planet, in this case) drives most of the plot, as Rico and his steel jaw launch themselves into basic training, which is essentially a glorified sports camp (frequent gory injuries and screams for a medic aside). It's an environment in which none-too-bright football star Rico can become a leader, despite having joined for the wrong reasons and making a decision that leads to one of his men having their head blown





The bugs of Klendathu provide perfect, nameless adversaries.



CLASSIC QUOTES

"NAKED FORCE HAS RESOLVED MORE CONFLICTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR. THE CONTRARY OPINION, THAT VIOLENCE DOESN'T SOLVE ANYTHING, IS WISHFUL THINKING AT ITS WORST; PEOPLE WHO FORGET THAT ALWAYS DIE"
JEAN RASCZAK

"SHOOT A NUKE DOWN A BUG HOLE, YOU GOT A LOT OF DEAD BUGS"
ACE LEVY

"I'M FROM BUENOS AIRES, AND I SAY KILL 'EM ALL!"
JOHNNY RICO

"COME ON, YOU APES. YOU WANT TO LIVE FOREVER?"
JEAN RASCZAK

"EVERYONE IS DOING THEIR PART. ARE YOU?"
NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

"ONE DAY SOMEONE LIKE ME IS GONNA KILL YOU AND YOUR WHOLE FUCKING RACE!"
ZANDER

"THEY SUCKED HIS BRAINS OUT"
JEAN RASCZAK

"I NEED A CORPORAL. YOU'RE IT, UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD OR I FIND SOMEONE BETTER"
JEAN RASCZAK

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RETRO CLASSIC
STARSHIP TROOPERS









off. Drill Sergeant Zim may be terrifying in a way only Clancy Brown can be, dispensing bodily harm and put-downs with brutal efficiency, but Verhoeven shoots it with the same breezy and upbeat energy as the high school scenes.

The shit gets real when the bugs obliterate Buenos Aires, and Rico reconsiders his decision to leave the Mobile Infantry (after taking the lashes he deserves, of course), but it's not really until the halfway point that Verhoeven launches into the chaos of the battlefield, with the majority of the bugs being faceless, spiny monsters that are essentially a collection of deadly spikes. As they tear the new recruits limb from limb, Verhoeven has great fun balancing two of his primary interests: social satire (the news cameraman makes sure to keep filming even as his anchor is torn to pieces) and carnage, as the shredded casualties pile up. It's important that the first battle is lost to establish that there's something to fight for, and introduces the insane notion that perhaps our heroes underestimated their enemy.

"ITS SATIRICAL NATURE CAN OBSCURE THAT IT'S ALSO FUN AS A SCI-FI ACTION MOVIE"

The sacrifices made – and that are still to be made – are underlined by the reappearance of Rico's old civics teacher Jean Rasczak, played by a snarling Michael Ironside. In class, Rasczak reminded his students that the best way to resolve a conflict is by force. On the battlefield, he's the living embodiment of this future's civic duty: if you die trying, that's OK. His iron fist is no coincidence, while his mercy killing of a soldier carried off by a flying bug allows him to make a point: he'd rather die than be taken by the enemy. If you can no longer be useful to the fight, death is the preferable option.

These violent lessons are eagerly swallowed by the beautiful, non-questioning cast. The film's two leads fit the part. Casper Van Dien's wooden performance and easy smirk work well for the easily angered and equally easily ordered Rico, while Denise Richards does very little except grin at anyone who's talking to her as she becomes an ace pilot.

Dina Meyer gives her character's yearning for Rico some dimensions, and Jake Busey is a compellingly odd comic relief, but perhaps the strangest casting is

JOIN NOW!
Five future soldiers we'd want to lead us

SGT TODD 3465
SOLDIER



1 Paul WS Anderson's costly flop starred Kurt Russell as a super-soldier bred for war who learns to make peace, before ultimately declaring war again.

STACKER PENTECOST
PACIFIC RIM



2 The top brass want to cancel the Jaeger program and build a gigantic wall in order to stop the invading Kaiju, but Idris Elba is having none of it.

MAJOR MITCH HUNTER
MUTANT CHRONICLES



3 When a sub-terranean machine turns everyone on Earth into mutants, call Thomas Jane. "I don't get paid to believe, I get paid to fuck shit up."

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The diverging relationship between Johnny and Carmen provides the film's focal point.





Michael ironside puts in a great performance as teacher-turned-commander Rasczak.

Harris as Carl, who rises to the military's top brass and reappears late on to give Rico and Carmen their orders. Carl, clad in a sci-fi version of SS officer regalia, scolds Rico for feeling upset about a few deaths. "You disapprove? Well, too bad! We're in this war for the species, boys and girls. It's simple numbers. They have more. And every day I have to make decisions that send hundreds of people like you to their deaths." Rico squares his jaw and answers, "Didn't they tell you, Colonel? That's what the Mobile Infantry is good for."

This discussion comes after Dizzy's funeral. Rico's eulogy drives home her sacrifice as the most important element of her character. "A citizen has the courage to make the safety of the human race their personal responsibility. Dizzy was my friend. She was a soldier. But most important, she was a citizen of the Federation."

Still, too much discussion of *Starship Troopers*' satirical nature can obscure the fact that it's also a hell of a lot of fun as a sci-fi action movie. Verhoeven's eye for gore, guts and gunfights makes the film an exhilarating watch, from the sprawling, expansive battles to the close-quarter encounters. The glee Verhoeven takes in coating his cast in showers of alien goo and his love of splatter brings Guillermo del Toro and James Gunn to mind, particularly the Brain bug, with a gruesome, brain-sucking proboscis extending from its quivering facial cavity.

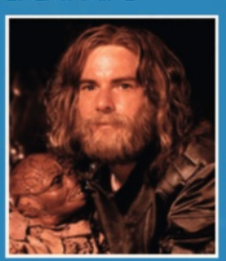
It's definitely a Verhoeven film, however. Functioning both as an entertaining action movie and an overblown comedy, it's simultaneously excessive and clever. From the unisex showers and Ironside getting his legs torn off to the media and military satire, it's a triumph from a master who has been absent from our screens for too long.

EDEN SINCLAIR
DOOMSDAY



4 Rhona Mitra plays the bionic-eyed badass who crosses a new Hadrian's Wall into Scotland in order to find the cure to a disease that threatens the rest of the UK.

WILLIS E DAVIDGE
ENEMY MINE



5 Dennis Quaid's human pilot is forced to trust his alien enemy counterpart if he wants to survive the planet that they've both crash-landed on.

WATCH FIRST



ROBOCOP (1987)
Verhoeven first made a splash in the US with his ultra-violent and hilarious social satire. I'd buy that for a dollar.

WATCH NEXT



SERENITY (2005)
Joss Whedon's cinematic resurrection of his beloved show satirised some of the same elements from a different perspective.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC
WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"It's a Nineties classic. Gory, alien packed, bit Fifties kitsch, stereotypical characters, what's not to love? It's a fun film!" **@KylaJN**



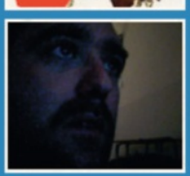
"Absolutely love it, except for the part when Ace starts playing the violin, for some reason that really irritates me." **@roxycampbell**



"Love it, Verhoeven loves pointing out how fascist US entertainment can be (see also: *RoboCop*, *Total Recall*)" **@benlashep**



"It's an excellent action flick with giant alien bugs and great characters. I still haven't got over Dizzy's demise!" **@WondrousReads**



"Funny, brilliant film satire on militarism, fascism and the original novel-cum-fascist manifesto itself" **@minwagefourdoll**

THE SCIFINOW HAMMER HORROR QUIZ

HOW SHARP IS YOUR HAMMER KNOWLEDGE? DO YOU KNOW YOUR DRACULAS FROM YOUR VAMPIRE LOVERS, OR YOUR CUSHING FROM YOUR KRONOS? FIND OUT WITH OUR QUIZ!

FIRST BLOOD

1. At which studio was Hammer located during their golden era?
2. Hammer branched into classic monsters with *The Curse Of Frankenstein*, but which studio did they have to come to an agreement with?
3. When did Hammer release *Horror Of Dracula*?
4. Which 1959 monster movie, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, also used a Universal monster?
5. Which Nigel Kneale creation kick-started the Hammer Horror brand?

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

6. How many times did Christopher Lee play Dracula for the studio?
7. Which *Batman* star plays the skeptical Arthur Holmwood in *Horror Of Dracula*?
8. Which vampire did Cushing's Van Helsing face in *The Brides Of Dracula*?
9. How many years passed between Christopher Lee's first appearance as Dracula and his return in *Dracula: Prince Of Darkness*?
10. According to the tagline, what does Dracula have an eye for in *Dracula: AD 1972*?

GOLDEN YEARS

11. Which actor replaced Brian Donlevy as Quatermass in *Quatermass & The Pit*?
12. Martin Scorsese singled out which *Frankenstein* sequel as his favourite, stating that "the implied metaphysics are close to something sublime"?
13. Oliver Reed starred in *The Curse Of The Werewolf*, but where does the story take place?
14. How many Hammer films did Bette Davis star in?
15. How does the Gorgon kill her victims?

DECAY AND RESURRECTION

16. Name the trilogy of lesbian vampire films made from 1970-71.
17. Which studio did Hammer move to after leaving Bray?
18. Which two actors played Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde?
19. *Beyond The Rave* was Hammer's first revival film, but what was their first revival theatrical release?
20. Who wrote the novel on which *The Woman In Black* was based?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

BARON FRANKENSTEIN

You're a dapper gentleman indeed. You could achieve true greatness if only people, with their ridiculous notions of morality and decency, would get out of your way.

11-15

COUNT DRACULA

To be honest, it's not exactly clear how intelligent you are, but your animal cunning and frankly stunning magnetism make it difficult to deny that you're really very impressive.

6-10

PROFESSOR BERNARD QUATERMASS

You're a brilliant scientist, but what use is all this knowledge if you're unable to convince others of what you know to be true?

0-5

CAPTAIN KRONOS

Like an action man equivalent of Van Helsing, frankly we have a hard time believing that you've got all that much going on upstairs.

ANSWERS: 1. BRAY STUDIOS **2.** UNIVERSAL STUDIOS **3.** 1958 **4.** THE MUMMY **5.** QUATERMASS **6.** SEVEN **7.** MICHAEL GOUGH **8.** BARON MEINSTER **9.** EIGHT **10.** LONDON'S HOTPANTS **11.** ANDREW KEIR **12.** FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN **13.** SPAIN **14.** TWO: THE NANNY AND THE ANNIVERSARY **15.** SHE TURNS THEM TO STONE **16.** THE KARNSTEIN TRILOGY – THE VAMPIRE LOVERS, LUST FOR A VAMPIRE AND TWINS OF EVIL **17.** ELSTREE **18.** RALPH BATES AND MARTINE BESWICK **19.** LET ME IN **20.** SUSAN HILL

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Cover image

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Distributed in the UK & Eire by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT ☎ 0207 429 4000

Distributed in Australia by Gordon & Gotch, Corporate Centre, 26 Rodborough Road, NSW 2086. ☎ + 61 2 9972 8800

Distributed in the rest of the world by Marketforce, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU ☎ 0203 148 8105

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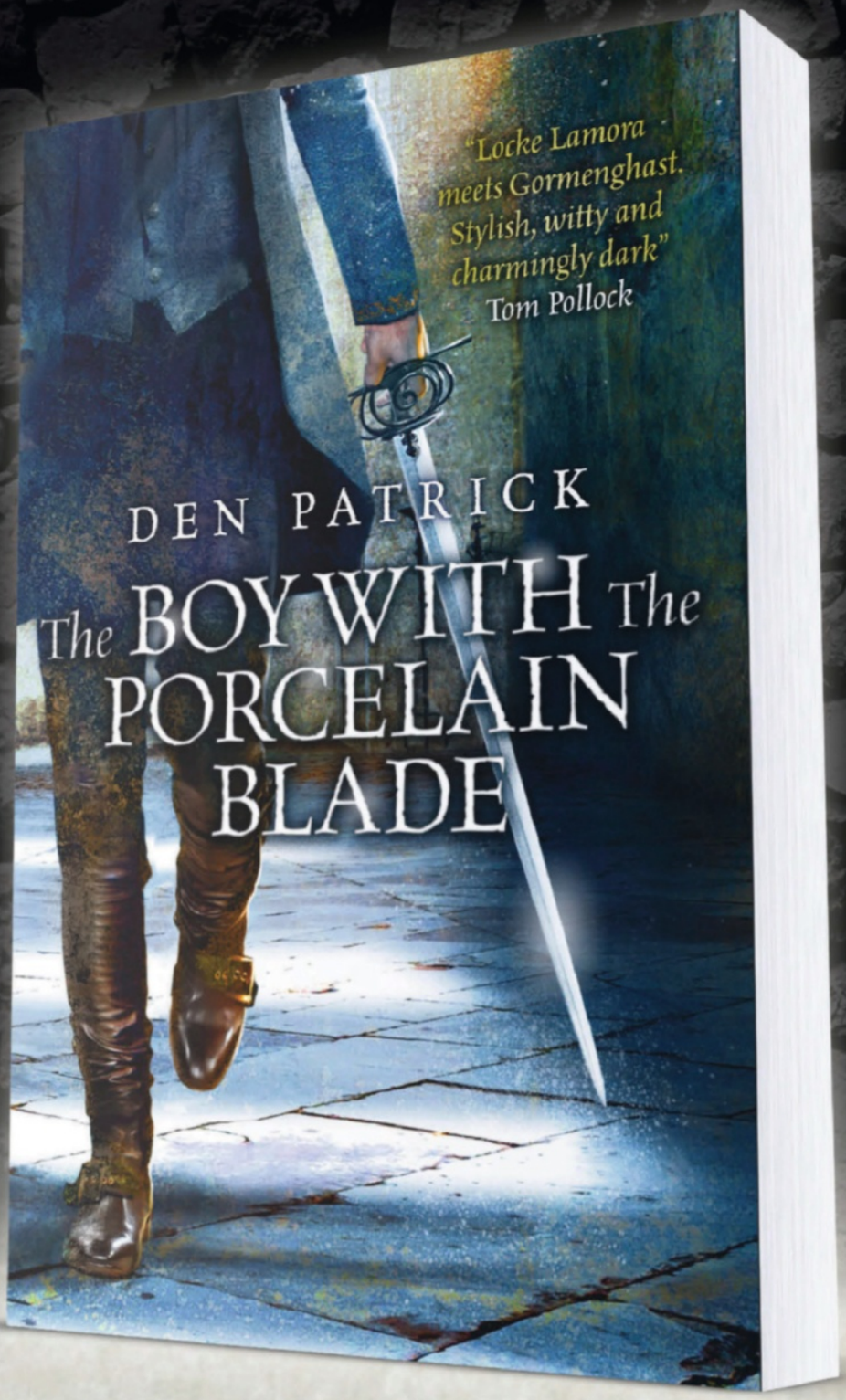
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ISSN 1477-6650

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